







# **IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO**





# **IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO**

**WITH BRUSH AND PEN**

**BY**

**MARY BARTON**

**WITH TWENTY ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOUR**

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## NOTE

I SHOULD like to express here my gratitude for kind help with my letterpress to Miss F. F. Montrésor, George Moore, Esq., Ronald Macleay, Esq. (late First Secretary to the British Legation in Mexico), and his wife.

M. B.



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# IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

## CHAPTER I

### ARRIVAL

A BEAUTIFUL country, a perfect climate! That I think must be the verdict of the traveller in Mexico whether he emerges from the desert regions of the north into the hill scenery of mid-Mexico, or lands at the ports of Tampico or Vera Cruz and mounts by picturesque railways up the lovely heights to the plain of Mexico City. For those who go by ship to Vera Cruz and arrive at night there awaits the spectacle of Orizaba peak, isolated and remote in lofty grandeur, gleaming white in the moon-

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light against the dark sky—the lesser mountains and foot-hills lost in haze, and the lights of the town streaming seaward outlining the harbour and bay; or if the travellers arrive by day they will see a low-lying cluster of houses and wharves backed by the delicately coloured hills melting into distance and crowned, completed, by that wondrous peak, pointed and snow-covered, radiant in the sunlight, but always subtle and illusive in its mystic beauty.

The town of Vera Cruz has been rendered much healthier by thorough drainage, but it does not tempt one to linger, and one feels compassion for those who have to live in a place so pestered by mosquitoes and malaria and, worse, yellow fever—and so wind-swept by “northers” that hardly anything will grow save in most sheltered spots. When tropical heat has constrained one to open doors and windows, in sweeps

## ARRIVAL

the wind with rushing gusts that blow everything down—pictures, screens, books, vases—over they go, crash after crash, while one's English hostess converses calmly on, heedless of one's starts and jumps and temporary aberrations, leaving everything on the floor as it falls—with the exception of pictures of our King and Queen, who, of course, cannot be allowed to remain in such a position even though the next gust will again lay them low.

The inhabitants seem cheerful, and turn out in numbers of an evening, walking round and round a small square where the band plays. The girls wear flounced muslin skirts—generally too long and sweeping the dust—scarves or shawls on their shoulders, and no hats, their hair dressed in the latest fashion and much ornamented with gay pins and combs or a large bow of ribbon across the back; the men are in very tight trousers

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and short jackets with immense hats, which are either of straw, fine or coarse, or felt in various colours, often embroidered with a design of tinsel and silk round the crown and upturned brim, or a large monogram. Custom formerly decreed that the girls should walk round together in an inner circle while the men perambulated outside, and this is not entirely done away with, though now as a rule the men sit on the seats and criticize the girls audibly as they pass.

When the train leaves Vera Cruz, it passes through tropical verdure, palms, plantains, creepers, and adobe houses (mud-huts), each with a bit of flower somewhere if not a gay little garden, but all growing out of old tins, pots, and boxes, piled about the house on tables or shelves or on the ground. Now one passes a deep gorge lined with curious-looking trees, some of them covered with a large white flower which seems dazzling

## ARRIVAL

in the sun, vying with the sparkling stream below running under beetling rocks or cliffs covered with a green mantle ; again one is among high brown lands with only dwarfed scrub or cactus to vary the monotony, but ever behind rise the beautiful hills. Then come spots of delightful colour, and one realizes that one is in a tangle of scarlet and rose hibiscus, bushes of double and single pink and white oleander, clinging abundance of bougainvillea, hedges of vivid poinsettia, orange- and lime-trees in fruit and flower, and numerous wild flowers carpeting their feet. Suddenly one is enveloped in a rush of delicious odour—gardenias ! Gardenias everywhere, rows of them, fields of them, looking like a tea-garden but for the greater size of the flower and its waxy whiteness.

At the next stop come the fruits ; men and women and children running beside the train with baskets and trays of quite



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new and wonderful things, green lumps—a cross between artichokes and fir-cones—which prove to have a delicious creamy flesh with numbers of big black pips and are called chirimoyas ; small brown fellows that look like bad pears both inside and out and are mostly an acquired taste, named chicos zapotes ; other zapotes large and green with melting insides of brown stuff at which most foreigners turn up their noses but which are really excellent ; oranges, of course, and very delicious ones, limes, too, and grape-fruit, and bunches of orange-coloured grenaditas, the fruit of the passion-flower, having the inside of a gigantic gooseberry which you swallow down like an oyster ; these last are so good that one does not know when to stop, even if half a dozen have slipped down one's parched and dusty throat. For travelling in Mexico is very dusty work, there is no doubt about that, although the conductors, abetted by the

## ARRIVAL

Mexican and German passengers, combine to close all windows and keep out all air in the hope of keeping out the dust. For my part, I think it is easier and pleasanter to wash oneself at the end of a journey and brush one's clothes, than to stifle all day in a stuffy carriage with an atmosphere of tobacco smoke, bad scent, sandwiches, and fruit, to say nothing of the unwashed few who are inevitably there, and the smells of drinks of various kinds hawked through the train at intervals by the conductor's assistant. This individual also comes into the carriage before each station and yells its name; sometimes he begins, "Señores pasajeros la estación de —," whatever it may be, but this is on the less important lines; on the main ones, American rush has conquered the native contempt for time—in this particular at all events—and the curt name of the station is all you hear.

You can also buy books and papers in

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the train from an *Agente de Publicaciones* who passes through from time to time, American fashion ; indeed, all the travelling is modelled on that of the States, even to the terrible Pullman-car at night, with its passengers of both sexes dining there first and then sleeping in its let-down berths on each side, shielded by curtains only from the narrow passageway, which may be thrust aside at any moment by the curious looking for their friends, etc., thereby causing moments of horror and embarrassment to the occupants who have to dress and undress behind them either stretched at full length or crouched on their knees with their heads banging against the roof. There is a dressing-room at each end of the car which holds two, but there may be thirty-six passengers all anxious to go into them at once, and there is always that terribly trying procession to and from them in a *négligé*

## ARRIVAL

condition. No, it is better to take an hour to get into your clothes under that somewhat protective curtain and then rush for the limited wash which is all you will get. For the rich there is an alternative—"the drawing-room"—ye gods, what a misnomer!—a tiny place with two berths at one end of the car, where you can at least have privacy though you pay for it with extreme lavishness, but it is generally engaged long before.

After a few experiences of railway travelling in Mexico or the States you will listen to the American's description of the comfort and luxury of travel in his country with a smile—but, if you are wise, a polite smile, for he is a sensitive creature—and in your heart you will thank God for your cosy little compartment with its two or three berths or beds and its complete privacy and airiness, if you will) provided by the European railways, at a small cost

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in Great Britain and at a comparatively small cost on the Continent.

Up and up the railway winds and mounts through wooded hills, jungly steeps and lovely valleys, passing Cordoba and Orizaba, and other delightful-looking places, till it emerges on the high table-land which surrounds Mexico City.





## CHAPTER II

### ORIZABA

AT Orizaba one is all among the hills, wooded steeps with pointed or rugged tops which only occasionally allow one a peep of the mighty peak behind soaring 17,000 feet into the blue. Everywhere is luxuriance and growth and colour in abundance, producing a sense of richness, while over all the humidity of the place—so rare in Mexico—sheds a soft blue which deepens at times to such intensity as to become the despair of the painter's palette; again and again one floods the hills with cobalt, and always Nature seems yet more blue.

The houses in the main street dwindle



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away to huts among the trees and end in an archway, the limit of the town.

The people crowd round as one works, gaping in amazement, for though a few painters from the States come down each winter, the folk are not yet accustomed to the sight of any one making pictures except with a camera, and when they find it is not done in a moment their astonishment grows apace, and after a few hours' work they come up and exclaim, "Mucho trabajo, señorita" ("Hard work, miss!"), surprised at what they consider one's great patience and perseverance; for work is not the Mexican's strong point, he will work valiantly for a short time, but when he has made enough to feed him and his family for the rest of the week he stops. The only reason that he can see for such application with the brush is that it must be very money-making, and the most frequent question put to me by the men looking over my

## ORIZABA

shoulder was, "Does it make many centavos?"

• The women generally giggle, but then they laugh at everything, and most of the men, too; one hears peals of laughter constantly, but in vain listens to the conversation for an explanation—it is just froth and bubble. They are, indeed, irresponsible children, that is, the "grown-ups," for the real children are sometimes very serious, and I was much impressed at Escamela by a person who could not have measured more than two feet in height and who conversed with me gravely on things in general and my picture in particular; I could not understand all he said, but gathered that he was rather pleased with my talent and approved of me on the whole, though he was distressed that I should make the horse brown when it was a grey one that had just passed, raising his large clear eyes to mine as he made some serious

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statement, but generally investigating my paraphernalia as he purred forth a flow of conversation.

When I returned to finish next day, he again joined me, the most delicious little figure in very tight white breeches about six inches in length, a tiny shirt worn outside (which is correct fashion in Mexico), a typical sombrero of minute size on the back of his head, and the usual coloured blanket—a straight piece with a hole in the middle through which the head is thrust—slung over him. He remarked that yesterday the señorita began in black and white, but now she was using much colour, and I was left gazing at this mite of three; and marvelling at his powers of observation and perspicuity.

That which the soul of the Mexican loveth most—next to centavos—is letting off fireworks; fireworks of a very squibby description and let off more often during

## ORIZABA

the daytime than at night. The syn-  
copated noise is very aggravating, and  
more than once routed me effectually;  
but I recall with pride that on at least  
one occasion my pleading accompanied  
by my best smile worked sufficiently on  
the feelings of youth to procure me im-  
munity. It is nearly always a good-  
humoured people if taken the right way,  
and I never seriously suffered from rude-  
ness even when the crowd was thickest  
round me and I had to elbow it back  
forcibly, though there were times when  
pulque<sup>1</sup> had done its work and I found  
individuals very unpleasant, not to say  
aggressive. What one really suffers from  
most is the effluvia, which is indeed mixed  
and forcible, and from the dirt and insects  
which abound. Harden one's heart one  
must, and try to think that endless fleas  
and constant bugs are of no consequence.

<sup>1</sup> Intoxicating liquor made from the maguey or aloe-  
plant.

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There are detestable little flies—out of doors—that always alight on one's eyes and drive one wild unless enveloped in a gauze covering, and at night the mosquito is rampant in all the warmer parts of the country, although mosquito-curtains are not to be found in the hotels.

Anything under 5,000 feet altitude is called "the hot country," and in winter the people of richer class in Mexico City have their week-ends like Londoners, going to Cuernavaca, Popo Park, and even as far as Orizaba from Saturday to Monday for country air and warmer sun.

I was sad to leave Orizaba, it is such a beautiful place, but time pressed, and I went on to Mexico City.

It was rather amazing to see well-dressed Mexicans who travelled first class buying at the stations every sort and kind of messy food sold on trays by the none-too-clean native. They must have known even better than I suspected, how





## ORIZABA

careless about cleanliness are the poorer Mexicans, and to my horror I saw these educated people lapping up dreadful little mixtures offered them on leaves, made of Heaven knows what ingredients.

But nice fresh-looking buns were quite another thing and bought eagerly by the long train, for the restaurant meals at wayside stations leave much to be desired, and the Mexican makes excellent bread and cakes—or rather *pâtisseries* of endless kinds, for the imitations of English cakes are not exciting.



## CHAPTER III

### TWO MOTOR DRIVES

THERE are many motors in Mexico City, and very few streets on which they can run with any comfort; so much are they cut up by tram-rails, or paved with uneven blocks of stone, or in such bad repair that they look like a rough sea. But everybody motors all the same.

Two days after I arrived—when I had just had time to leave my introductions and have a few calls returned by those who were especially anxious to be kind, and who knew how absolutely lost one feels in a strange large city—I was whirled off in a motor by our First Secretary's wife, to get the lie of the

## TWO MOTOR DRIVES

country round and to see if some of the suburbs would afford me subjects for my work.

We went first to Chapultepec—passing the bull-ring on the way—by a beautiful straight, tree-lined road specially laid for motoring which leads directly to that pretty hill clothed with trees so eminently suited for the President's suburban residence, and circled round it by park-like avenues, which are, however, open to the public, admiring the ahuehuatl-trees, splendid specimens of a kind I had not before heard of, which have masses of dark cedar foliage and rough, picturesque stems, and are no doubt of the cedar tribe.

From that through ever-decreasing houses to Tacubaya, a favourite resort of the townspeople and the survival of an ancient town or village much written of by Cortes, through Mixcoac to San Angel. Everywhere I was struck by the Mon-

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golian type of countenance that constantly appeared among the people. This is so remarkable, that combined with the reported finding of china vessels by the followers of Cortes among the possessions of the inhabitants, and some other slighter indications of possible Eastern civilization, it has given rise to amazing theories of land communication with China, of ancient ships that navigated the mighty Pacific before we Europeans had succeeded in crossing the Atlantic, and even of ice travelling over the Bering Straits.

The very way the women do their hair—in two long hanging plaits into which they twist false hair and even black tape or boot-laces to make the plaits longer—is Mongolian, and brought back memories of the women I had seen on the great Thibetan frontiers, the women of Nepal, Sikhim, and Bhutan ; many of the Mexican women have the same jolly laughing mien and the same short, squat type of figure.

## TWO MOTOR DRIVES

I was delighted with the old inn at San Angel, saw at once I could find many pictures there, and planned a stay in it of some weeks, which, however, I only managed at the very end of my time, and therefore write of it farther on.

Then we saw churches at Coyocan and Churubusco, quaint and rather interesting with their occasional outside tiling, bare interiors and surroundings of trees; and went on by the Pedregal—that strange, wide-stretching mass of volcanic matter which differs entirely from the country on every side of it both in appearance and vegetation. Basaltic rock and lava, not piled together in great weird lumps and masses as one sees in other flows from volcanoes, but flatter, as if the stream had been more molten and settled down in bigger masses, yet ridged and knife-edged everywhere, sharp enough to cut one's boots. It is not bare; in places closely covered with scrub and even an

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occasional stunted tree, and a skin covering of minute plants and grasses through which one feels the rock.

What may it not conceal? Keeping its secret under a conglomerate which rises suddenly from the plain around, a plain which possessed towns and villages in mediaeval times during the last of the ancient civilizations, when the people are supposed to have been decadent and much on the decrease owing to internecine warfare. Perhaps it could reveal some of the wonders of those ancient civilizations which are still only guessed at ; although everywhere through the country there are evidences of what lies beneath, awaiting the enterprise of the excavator.

It is curious that so little should yet have been done. I know that there are explorers of more than one nationality at work, that many interesting things have been revealed at Mitla, and more beautiful discoveries made in Yucatan, but the

## TWO MOTOR DRIVES

search has not yet been taken up in any large way, although Mexico's rich neighbours in the States are beginning to be thoroughly interested in this country, and always have been, to some extent.

Still the fact remains that Mexican history before the coming of Cortes is a blank as regards any tangible record. We have reports of invasions and conquests of the Toltecs, Chicimecs, Mexicans, and Alcouans before the Aztecs came and swept all before them—gathered by Cortes and his followers from the inhabitants in 1519. But whether he destroyed all records, or whether they did not exist, has not yet been satisfactorily established. That there was much history to relate, worth knowing from its connexion with a high state of civilization mingled with strange barbarisms, is certain, and it remains with earth's human burrowers to bring it forth.

The Pedregal is a fine place from which

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to view the country, being sufficiently raised and yet comparatively flat over its large surface, so that one gets a completely circular look-out, and the chain of mountains that surrounds the plain stands beautifully on all sides. A peaceful place for meditation after a long dusty, heated day of strife in business; hours of competition with the money-getters, the sharp men of affairs, more acute than oneself in the race to be "top dog." The snow-capped distant peaks look down with everlasting serenity, and as they flush delicately with evening rose, the end of the day hushes down, the turmoil of life ceases and the mind calms, taking its just position in the surrounding cosmos.

From the Pedregal we crossed to the Viga Canal and came back to the town, bumping over the atrocious road with such sudden jolts and bounds that the motor's slippery leather seat could not hold me, and a lively game of battledore







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and shuttlecock was played with me, while I admired the stately canal under its poplars alongside, the deeply dark but clear water reflecting many a long barge with piled-up greenery, etc., propelled by a lithe figure in white or blue shirt.

Some of the autumn flowers were still in bloom in the market gardens on the other side of the road and made good spots of colour—big poppies and gladioli : the little gardens are separated by water divisions which keep them green and luxuriant through the almost rainless months and the dust of spring.

It was evening now, and Popocatpetl was growing pink, and the commonplace houses of the town outskirts were glorified with suffused colour, as were the faces of those we met, at the close of our delightful drive which ended with tea at the British Legation.

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My next drive was through the city, when our minister motored me to see all the places of interest he could think of.

We saw the Salto del Agua, a stone carved fountain where water brought in by an aqueduct in former times debouched in a plaza with a quaint church at one end. This is an old and poor quarter of the town, and some of the names of pulque-shops are amazing: "corazon de Jesus" (the heart of Jesus) was one; "el Spirito Santo" (the Holy Spirit) another; varied with names of animals, heroes, great soldiers, and saints!

The drinking is pretty bad, and pulque seems horribly effectual in reducing both men and women to a state of imbecility and instability. I saw more people incapacitated in daylight in Mexico than I remember seeing in any other country—save Ireland in the days of my childhood, when almost every man one met on the road coming from a town on a market-day





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was drunk—a condition of things which is, I am thankful to say, greatly altered.

The tipsy in Mexico were often clean and respectable-looking young men; I was told that their whole idea is to get over what small amount of work they consider necessary in the morning, and then betake them to the pulque-shops to sodden themselves all the afternoon.

Pulque does not keep, and must be supplied freshly from the country every day. It is the juice of the flower of the maguey or aloe before it has come to birth, and when the poor half-developed bud has been cut and bled, it is left mutilated and exposed in its paleness, after this rude awakening from its secret existence. The plants take many years to mature and only flower once, but the frequently slashed and defaced growth destroys the effect of an otherwise beautiful plant. In some parts of the country one sees fields of maguey stretching for miles and miles,

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planted in equidistant rows, the lines of which almost make one giddy watching their perspective from the train as they swirl away on each side. To see the plant in perfection one should observe it amidst the wild jungle of the hill-side, where it throws wide its strong, finely curved spikes and shoots a tall truss of flower into space.

The juice is collected at early dawn and conveyed away in quaint vessels of gourd or skin to the stills, where it is quickly fermented, and brought into the towns on donkeys.

We visited the "Biscainas," of which I give a picture farther on ; and a fine old palace which belonged to one of the great Spanish generals, now let in tenements and used as a storehouse for many kinds of goods, piled up in its large courtyard and under its handsome porticoes.

We saw several churches, too, and that lovely little chapel called the "Concep-

## TWO MOTOR DRIVES

cion," which stands by itself in a plaza, one small beautiful dome and its walls—nothing else.

Everywhere we were within an ace of annihilating a dog. There are so many in the city, so many throughout the country. The people seem to delight in having them, and yet they usually behave badly to them: though not perhaps to their own particular hound. Indeed, I was often struck by the faithful affection the creatures showed, but knowing dog nature I could not feel sure that it was caused by the beautiful behaviour of the human, more likely I fear by that wonderful Christian forgiveness and noble forgetting of wrongs which the dog so often displays; but to every passing dog every man, youth, and child was an enemy. Many is the stone I have seen flung—and apparently for no reason except the desire to hurt—at the poor fellow trotting down the street, more often slinking along



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cockatoos as those in the cages, and I longed to blot in the colour of their splendid plumage; that was one of the things that made me regret my restricted time, and the fact that I had to be back in London with over fifty pictures in six months—that and the desire to make studies of the delightful piccaninnies that abound. The grown people did not fill me with enthusiasm, but the tiny, well-made children, too small for their age, with three inches of pantaloons or petticoat, large clear, dark eyes, enormous hats that nearly extinguished them or long plaits of black hair—made me crave for more time.

How remarkable are the Mexican hats is of course a truism. But to estimate truly their oddity one should view a crowd of men from behind, especially when the heads are slightly raised. One sees nothing but hats, no heads no necks no shoulders, nothing

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but the great circles of straw or felt and the pointed crowns, with a few bodies and legs thrown in in the near foreground. When I drew a poster for my exhibition in London, of a number of men looking up at the peak of Popocatepetl I was told people would not know what it was meant for, and the Director of The Fine Art Society made unkind remarks about baskets and saucers in reference to my hats ; but a kind painter friend suggested the removal of a hat and the substitution of a neck and shoulders, and the trick was done. It was no longer a meaningless mass of hats, but a crowd of Mexicans, and was forthwith printed.

The zerape or blanket—generally of oblong shape with a hole in the middle—which the Mexican huddles about him of a cold morning, or carries loosely slung round his neck when tramping the roads, seems to me ugly in colour, either

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a crude red or a dark brown, sometimes ornamented with rough stitchery. The women's *rebosos*, or shawls, too are generally uninteresting in colour; and tints with which they paint their houses are so crude until toned down by the summer rains that I cannot think they are a people imbued with love of colour like their brethren the Spanish, or still more the Italians.

Perhaps I should rather state that they are fond of colour, but have not the fine sense of it, the eye for good effect, that the Italians have.

The way in which England is losing trade in Mexico must be a subject of sorrow to all interested in English affairs, and my charioteer spoke of it with regret. I was told that some years ago England possessed the entire iron and steel trade of Mexico, but that now it has passed to Germany. Certainly Germany is hard at work there in many

## TWO MOTOR DRIVES

and various ways, and as it came under my own experience that she is willing to send out her sons of good family to serve over a counter in ironmongers' shops in order to further her interests, I felt what a poor chance our leisurely and rather high-handed manner of doing business and extending our trade concerns had against such zeal.

While I was there a well-known English steam-packet company ceased to book passengers to and from Mexico and confined itself to cargo, allowing a big German line to usurp all the passenger traffic.

It is natural that Mexico should do more business with its neighbour the United States than any other country, and adopt the American ideas and customs, since there are more people from the States there than other foreigners, but considering the preference that Mexicans profess for English ways, and

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the fact that they send the majority of their sons and daughters of the richer classes to be educated in England, there must be something wrong if we cannot keep and even increase the business we do with them.

A curious fact that I was told is that when any big scheme is started in Mexico it is to London not New York, to English capitalists not American, that application is made for money to finance it; whether this is accurate or not, undoubtedly much English capital is sunk in the country.

But to return to our drive: we came back through narrow streets with long, high-sounding names, nearly colliding with a cart drawn by oxen yoked one in front of the other,—most of the work is done by oxen, horses are generally used for riding and driving—looked in at the cemetery and a hero's grave, passed through the cathedral square,

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which has fine shady trees standing around and in front of the handsome double-towered church, and visited some buildings covered with ornament of what seemed to me an unpleasant rococo style, but which were rather good in colour, the stone flushed with pale yellow or warm rose.

Coming along the street "Cinco de Mayo" we emerged by the new General Post Office, which is a copy of a palazzo on the Grand Canal in Venice, and is very handsome.

Thence to the Alameda—the public gardens of Mexico City—a place full of beautiful trees and fountains and flowers. There is always an "alameda" in every town of importance, and those that I saw were attractive, places to tempt one to sit on the stone benches and rest a while, and watch the ways of little perky birds and lizards.

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## CHAPTER IV

### MEXICO CITY

OWING to the kindness of those in our Legation who motored me about, I was soon able to discover subjects and get to work in the city, and though it does not lend itself much to the brush, being full of very new (and handsome) buildings in the better parts, with quantities of scaffolding in every direction where fresh houses are being built, and though in the older parts hardly anything is left as it was, yet now and again I saw a bit of street I should like to have attempted, but was stopped by the crowd and bustle of the thoroughfare. Even when I ventured on a sketch of an old







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building or doorway in a quieter part I was at once surrounded by a swarm of children, which was presently backed by a crowd of adults who pressed closer and closer until the atmosphere and the remarks and the close proximity to such dirt overwhelmed me and I fled.

It was indeed under stress that this corner of the Biscaiñas was painted—or rather begun, and it was finished at home from memory and some subsequent visits and notes. It is a wonderful old palace of red tisonle stone—whose rose-red I have seen equalled in no other stone—faced with grey limestone, and stretching its great façade round a large square garden with trees, being now most happily used as an orphanage and refuge for children.

The churches of the city are very numerous, some of the old ones handsome and picturesque, with endless domes and cupolas and much carving and

## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

impasto work, occasionally good and simple in design, but generally in an unpleasant and rococo style and so engulfed in the buildings around that pictures are impossible.

Inside they are even more hopeless as subjects for the painter, being swamped with gaudy decoration and gilded detail which may create amazement in the sight of the educated but will certainly not uplift his soul in admiration. The horrible and would-be realistic figures of the Saviour and the Saints, many of which have real hair affixed to them, frowsy with age and dust, and sometimes clotted with supposed blood; the highly coloured tarletan and calico draperies much ornamented with tinsel, the soiled artificial flowers, the gaudy candlesticks, and all the other messes which combine to destroy the effect of arch and column, line or proportion, make the interiors places of horror to me.





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I was able to get one picture of an old church that I liked after much negotiation in the sacristy. Yellow light and yellow draperies veiled its defects and the kneeling figures were shrouded in mysterious darkness.

At first I thought the Señor Padre must object to such secular work going on in his church, and possibly to the presence of a foreigner and a heretic, so long was I kept waiting; but I soon discovered that it was only that time hung very heavy on his hands and that he did not often get the chance of questioning a stranger (I fear his curiosity was not exactly over-fed by what he extracted from my very limited Spanish!), and also that it was absolutely incumbent on a gentleman of his position to make his dignity felt, which he further proceeded to do in the middle of the conversation by disappearing up a narrow stair in the corner of the sacristy leaving

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me seated there for a considerable time with naught to do but twiddle my thumbs and pose as the awful example to a number of priests and acolytes who sat around with all their beady eyes fixed upon me.

At last I was allowed to get to work. When service began I was ready to remove myself, but was assured it was unnecessary; and the faithful, especially the choir—which consisted of two boys and a man with an ear-piercing falsetto—came to look on at intervals and make audible comments. Presently the church emptied, and seeing the verger was betaking him to his dinner at midday I made him promise not to lock me in, but I suppose fears for his tip supervened, for he promptly did it, nor did he come back at one o'clock when I wanted to go. Fortunately I spied a large cavity in the floor of an adjoining chapel where workmen had been relaying the old founda-

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tions, and seeing light from outside coming in somewhere I jumped down and found my way out to the street. I like to think of that cunning old party's face when he returned.

The people's blind faith and devotion to their religion seemed to me very remarkable, not even in Ireland is there anything like it. It is curiously mixed with survivals of their old Aztec faith and that of even earlier civilizations, and such superstitions and traditions superimposed on the Roman Catholic religion make a very curious combination.

I have seen a peasant enter a country church by the roadside (which only contained me, whom he did not see) and kneel and kiss the first step, then the floor inside, the side walls, every altar, every pillar, every railing, every step, till he came to the high altar, where he lay down flat on his face and stayed a while, repeating his performance to the



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door. Perhaps it was only some penance, but from the rapt gaze of the man it seemed to me like an act of overflowing religious enthusiasm.

Here and there one comes across a beautiful house or palace generally let in tenements and the courtyard with its fine porticoes and stairways used as a dumping-ground for all kinds of stores or refuse. Here Cortes lived, here Alvarez or another of the Spanish generals had his house, and one tries to picture the city of that day standing in the middle of a lake with waterways for its streets, and approached by causeways from the mainland, as Prescott has described it for us.

Nowadays there is no lake except at some distance from the town, it apparently having been dried up and built over until all that is left is the fact that no solid foundations are available; deep down underneath the houses water is every-

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where, or liquid mud ; and in many cases the builders, unable to drive piles, have been obliged to lay a criss-cross of beams on the shifting surface and build upon that. In one place I heard continuous pumping going on night and day, and was told that the owner of the ground was still hoping to pump his foundations dry after having kept up the work for months.

It seemed a little like the labours of Sisyphus.

Electric tramways run everywhere through the town and out to all its suburbs, which are many and most attractive, and a curious feature of the streets is the electric tramway hearse. Frequently one sees a funeral consisting of a number of cars on the rails ; first comes an open one like a long low truck with a black catafalque covering under which reposes the coffin and the wreaths ; the next may be another piled up with

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wreaths and crosses, and then follows car after car with the mourners. This of course stops all the tramway traffic for the time being, and in one of the main streets by the Jardin Hotel, where the tram-cars pass all day long in one continuous stream, I have seen crowds of people waiting for their cars a considerable time while a lengthy funeral passed, the Mexicans patiently enough perhaps, for will not any time do for their business, even *mañana* (to - morrow)?—but the people whose time usually means money, the people of “quick lunches”—not so patiently.

The “quick lunch” was quite new to me, and there was one place I frequented for a glass of milk (to supplement the food which seemed to have so little nourishment) where I used to watch with great interest numbers of young men and women dashing in either to take a hurried snack standing by a counter, or

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seating themselves on high stools round a double bar in the centre of the room, inside which the waitresses stood and dispensed the many and various cold dishes from shelves beneath. The awful feeling of hurry induced by this breathless coming and going, this rapid absorption of food, gave one imaginary indigestion on the spot.

But the greater number of shops and business houses take a lengthy midday siesta, American, Mexican, German, and English alike, and close their doors from twelve to two o'clock or one o'clock to three.

A tramway which had "Jamaica" as its terminus (pronounced Ha-myika) took me along the commencement of the Viga Canal, the one remaining waterway, which apparently springs from the bowels of the city and leads you gradually out to the country, where it eventually loses itself in the "floating gardens" of Xochi-

## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

milco. It is crowded with barges bringing in vegetables and flowers and all kinds of country produce, barges like giant punts and worked in the same way by one or more men sinking deep their long poles at the prow and walking to the stern as they push.

From its commencement the canal is infinitely picturesque, reflecting uneven buildings of the most varied colours, an occasional low-arched bridge thrown across, figures and animals, piles of oranges, green vegetables, pumpkins, flowers, the frilled and coloured curtains of the pleasure barges, and as one gets out farther the flowering shrubs and trees by the edge, lending enchantment with its blurred reproduction, its subdual of colour, its confusing of hard line.

It is a long panorama of pictures from start to finish which are most cruelly unattainable by any one not possessing iron control, a man's strength, a complete





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absence of olfactory nerves, and no magnetic attraction for insects. I did brave the dangers on one occasion (and paid !), securing a sketch which, however, like others, has found its way back to Mexico and is not available for this book ; but farther on one finds quieter painting grounds and picturesque houses by the side of the canal, with fine poplars lining its banks.



## CHAPTER V

### SOME OF THE SUBURBS

ONE of the fallacies one meets at the outset is the conviction of most of the foreign residents that Mexico has almost invariably a cloudless blue sky—so unobservant is the ordinary denizen of the globe; generally at sunset great beautiful masses pile themselves up, golden and pink above the hills surrounding the city which at that hour are blue and violet and lose their feet in a mystery. In the daytime one frequently sees clouds white and grey flecked and fleecy, cirrus and cumulus just as in Europe, although the weather is continuously fine.

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I believe just after the rains of summer everything is very clear-cut, and details visible at an immense distance, but during the five months I spent in the country, from the beginning of December to the end of April, there was always an atmosphere, a delicate veiling, and if one saw to a great distance, that great distance lent its shades of blue and purple just as the nearer distance does at home, and one was never startled with hard outlines or crudity as one often is in a Swiss landscape.

From every rising ground around the town and from the tops of tall houses—most of whose roofs are flat-topped—are visible the lovely peaks of Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl, the god of the Aztecs and his wife, which are always snow-capped, and give one a fresh impression of dignity and beauty each time one sees them. So much is this the case that one finds the otherwise casual and superficial person speaking of them with more or less

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bated breath, while those who have eyes to see have no words to express their feelings with regard to the delicately pointed pyramid of Popo, the massed and rocky outline of his glorious spouse. Perhaps on every one's sub-consciousness is impressed a faint and far-away echo of the worship and adoration of old times, and an attitude of reverence is induced, very foreign sometimes to the nature of its recipient. However it may be, Popocatepetl stands for the point, the climax, of poetical feeling in Mexico, and the nearer one gets to him, the more one sees him, the more that feeling grows.

One of the loveliest views is from Chapultepec, the President's country house, which stands on a small sudden hill—"the hill of the grasshopper"—just outside the city, clothed and surrounded with beautiful trees and shrubs. That, alas! is all of it that is beautiful, the building being in the main barrack-like





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with turret accretions of no style, and even added pieces of corrugated iron roofing. But being asked to try and do a picture of it I found that the end view through the trees lent itself fairly well to pictorial effect.

While I was working there I got up suddenly from a low stool and found a large scorpion under me. At that altitude they say their sting is not very poisonous, but all the same I felt glad of my escape. Another time going to sleep in a country inn I saw one on the wall just over my bed, quite handy for a drop, and not feeling sure that he was squashable with the heel of a shoe—he looked so horny—I went for the porter's assistance and was amused to see him looking round the room for a weapon and finally fixing—in an apologetic way—on the shoe that had suggested itself to me, and which was effectively used, but to the detriment of the wall.

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On a road round the palace of Chapultepec it is fashionable to drive every afternoon, proceeding at a walking pace in a continuous double stream of carriages and motors for hours; later when the lights are lit the same business goes on for at least another hour in the Avenida San Francisco, one of the principal streets of the city.

The poorest who aspire to any fashion seem to be able to afford clothes and carriages—hired if nothing better offers—although at home they are probably living on little more than beans and tortillas (a thin flat fried cake made of Indian corn-meal and water), the staple foods of the country. The one great meal of the day is early dinner, at which in the larger houses many courses are served; and I believe a Mexican luncheon-party is a thing never to be forgotten owing to the amount of food and drink one has to consume and the impossibility of getting

## SOME OF THE SUBURBS

away from it until late in the afternoon ; but the other meals of the day are rather scanty.

The hotels of Mexico have been much abused, and many of them thoroughly deserve it. But their drawbacks are not always remediable by the proprietors, for it is the character of the servants that causes them, and a man may start a most creditable hotel with everything as it should be, and in a year's time all will have deteriorated, for he can get no servants to keep up his standard ; they may be taught the right way to do things and do them so for a time, but in the end they will inevitably go their own way, and slackness results. But I am bound to add that in some cases it is the proprietors or managers who are slack, who consider that these little things are of no consequence and their visitors suffer.

Every housekeeper told me the same



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thing, the only way to live with any peace or comfort, the only way to keep sane in a naughty world is to wink at iniquities and ignore deficiencies that would not be tolerated at home. There are indeed most faithful and invaluable servants to be found—but faithful and invaluable in their own way, not yours, not the way of civilized Europe—and these are chiefly found by the families of Mexicans.

People try Japanese servants, and Chinese servants, but nothing really extricates them from their difficulties, and second-best is all they can arrive at in their houses.

Hot water is the real crux in Mexico. I feel as if I ought to give it a chapter to itself and spell it in large capitals. In one place one rings for it repeatedly, and after much waiting gets a small tepid jugful; in another one rings but gets no answer to the bell at all, and wandering off in one's dressing-gown and

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slippers down long corridors, or round a garden *patio* (court-yard), or downstairs and through the nether regions, one may perhaps succeed in collaring a waiter who has turned gardener for the nonce, or a cook who is smoking a cigarette in a filthy dressing-gowny garment, and who may simply for the sake of one's sex be induced to part with some of the water heated for the morning coffee, the abduction of which is loudly resented.

I am a persistent person, and I did always succeed in getting enough water to make a luke-warm and very shallow bath in my india-rubber tub, but it was with the expenditure of perseverance and energy that might have conquered me a country, or discovered the North Pole.

Occasionally there was a *femme de chambre*, and I remember being amazed at finding a treasure in one inn who actually left me fresh towels every day. The servants frequently go out for the day and leave you

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with none, but usually it is a vacuous "boy" who does your room. I strongly recommend women who travel without a maid to take gowns and blouses that fasten in front, or they will often find themselves in a nice quandary. I can see myself now wandering vainly along the veranda corridors of the Jardin Hotel in Mexico City looking for a female of any size, shape, or kind to fasten a dress at the back, a few hooks of which had defeated my most gymnastic efforts, and at last hailing with joy an American lady in the far distance which was chastened into deprecating mildness at her nearer approach, and ended in an apologetic whisper for help when I saw her disdainful nose, but she did it! and I was once more my own woman.

Another time I failed entirely at achieving a fastening-up and received a lady visitor in the salon, with remarkable

## SOME OF THE SUBURBS

success keeping my back pasted against my chair or presenting a full front when I had to rise.

The prices of things are very astonishing; one's room will probably be very high in price, and one's dinner very low, but on the whole things are distinctly dear. Not as bad as New York, however, where a friend and I paid £1 for our cab between the steamer and the hotel, and where my living for four days cost me as much as a month's residence in London, although I exercised rigid economy.

In one country town of a Mexican state they gave me a room which was large certainly, but so dark from the windows being buried in thick trees that I could not see what things were until I got them on the floor by the open door, and this room was priced eight dollars—sixteen shillings—per day, the room alone, with a tiled floor, dressing-table made of an old packing-case covered with muslin, and the

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rest of the furniture *en suite*, an electric light that would not have embarrassed a cat supplemented by a smelling oil lamp, and a door that would not lock and apparently had not been locked for years, with an ironical notice on the wall begging visitors to lock their doors.





## CHAPTER VI

### SUBURBS CONTINUED

ONE of the most attractive places near the city is Churubusco with its quaint old tiled blue and yellow church; and near this is the "Country Club," an American institution which means a golf-course, tennis-courts, a place for dances, theatricals, and concerts and a residential club in one. It is beautifully situated and a handsome building, and very popular with all the English-speaking residents and many others.

The fine avenue opposite runs at the back and the views all round are delightful, and sunsets from it are notable, the



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sun dropping behind the hills which are seen from the front.

While painting this picture I took shelter from the sun—for want of a better place—under the lee of an engine which was pumping at the side of the drive and which seemed a very innocent object during the three hours or more I worked by its side ; but just when my paper was well covered, when I had got a good morning's work in to my satisfaction, and completed a sky that I flattered myself was really atmospheric, and was packing my goods preparatory to departure, what should the miserable thing do but emit a loud snort and suddenly cover me and the picture with a fine brown rain. In vain I snatched the stretcher and sheltered it behind my devoted body, the mischief was done, and my entire sky was speckled like a pheasant's egg.

My feelings can be imagined, and the hours of work and patience expended on

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the obliteration of that pernicious shower I shall not soon forget.

A landscape painter has many such vicissitudes, none of mine more remarkable than that which occurred once in Ireland, where I was painting on some sea marshes which I had reached by a train journey of two hours, and where I was landed for at least four more. The village was a long way off, and even if I could have reached it carrying a large stretcher and a heavy kit, I should have found no vehicle to take me into civilization. I had been down to the place before and my picture was well advanced, but I had not painted for more than a quarter of an hour when a sudden wild gust came, whisked the stretcher off the easel and landed it in the middle of a large pool quite out of my reach. It was too deep for wading, and if I got in and wet my clothes I should have to sit in them for over three hours. What was I to do? Dismayed I sat and

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gave in, got down, and effaced themselves in a covered wagonette which was fortunately secured. The children of the party and I hung on for a while longer, even when our already distressed and excited steeds were startled almost out of control by a rider going by at full gallop. He was a person full of fury because he heard that his hired horses in the wagonette were going to be taken half a mile farther than he had understood and who galloped all the miles back alongside to see that we did not get an inch more than our bargain! In the end demoralized by the state to which the dust in our eyes, the condition of our clothing, and the distress of our horses reduced us, we caved in and took refuge in the vehicle.

A dust-storm is a horrible thing, and this was quite a mild specimen.

Another time I saw one in which everything but the most immediate objects were blotted out in five minutes,

## SUBURBS CONTINUED

and standing as I did on the roof of a high hotel it was an extraordinary sight. It was just as if the whole world except the island on which one stood was engulfed in a sea of khaki colour and darkness, waving and billowing up to one's feet, and not only filling the eyes, nose, and mouth with grit, but giving one a sickening sense of discomfort, as if one's limit was reached and no more could be endured.

Another of the delightful places near the city is San Angel, but of this I will write later as it was the last place in which I stayed before leaving the country.

## CHAPTER VII

### MISCELLANY

LET no one believe he can travel comfortably through Mexico without Spanish. I was told that French, English, and Italian would get me along finely, but fortunately I hold the opinion that one cannot enjoy a country without acquiring its language in some degree, even if it be only a smattering, and I worked at Spanish a little before leaving England and on the voyage out, so that I was not entirely nonplussed when I arrived and found that none of the servants (beyond an occasional waiter or porter in the larger hotels), none of the cab-drivers, none of the employés on trams, etc., none of the country-people

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and few of the shopkeepers and assistants spoke anything but Spanish. Even in the largest shops of the city if one cannot express one's wants in Spanish one has to wait interminably sometimes for the one assistant who knows French or English and who is dancing attendance on some good American lady who cannot make up her mind, or engaged three deep because of his lingual talent.

Again I was assured that all the upper classes spoke French, and I can only record my experience of being on more than one occasion introduced to Mexican families who spoke nothing but Spanish; and I have a painfully vivid recollection of one of these introductions during the earliest part of my stay when a lady—knowing she could speak nothing but her own language—asked to be introduced and endeavoured to hold a conversation on Art with me in the hearing of her family and friends and several bystanders

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in the hall of an hotel. Grateful responses to her enthusiastic admiration of my work thronged my brain, and noble sentiments on Art filled my heart, but I cannot remember getting out anything beyond some much-abbreviated inanities on the beauty of her country and the loveliness of its sunshine, followed by the statement of a most pressing engagement—and flight.

It is a very pretty language, and not difficult to acquire a smattering of, enough to ask for what one wants and satisfy one's curiosity, and "pass the time of day" with one's fellow-creatures, but to know and speak it well is another thing.

I suppose when writing of Mexico I ought to be able to write of a bull-fight, for every town and many a village has its arena, but nothing would induce me to go to such an exhibition, and when I saw a vivid reproduction of one on a cinematograph it made me feel so

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sick that I could hardly sit out the performance.

Next to the bull-fight, cinematographs are the entertainment of the country! and I saw more of them in a few months there than I have in all the years at home. They are crowded every night, and are sometimes very good indeed, seldom coarse or disgusting. There is one shown free in the open street at night on the side of a house in Mexico City, as an advertisement of cigarettes, and crowds collect to watch the series of pictures.

Plays there are none, one may say, for only an occasional company comes down from the States for a short time; and good concerts are rare. A splendid-looking theatre is being built in the city and things may be very different in that way soon. But the priesthood sets itself against theatrical performances, and although monasteries and nunneries have been



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suppressed by the Government, they all exist *sub rosa*, and the power and influence of the Church is very great.

In one town almost wholly under its domination an impressario wished to give a concert with a well-known singer as star, and was told that unless he squared the archbishop with five hundred dollars there would not be a dozen people in the hall, but if he did the clerics would advise their flocks to attend such a desirable entertainment, and the place would be full. He and his star refused the terms and the concert was not held.

An odd thing that strikes one at once in the city is that the posters are not printed and pasted on the walls but painted thereon by hand, and are generally of an immense size. Most of them are, of course, appalling, but immensely enterprising and painstaking; and some are very comical, either from intention—as in

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the case of the advertisement of a gramophone which was depicted as belching forth its comic song in front of the Sphinx, whose head was tilted back in a paroxysm of laughter, showing one immense tooth—or by accident, when the perspective of a shop finds a vanishing-point a few yards away, or a figure at least eight feet high displays a towering collar round a head of less than normal size, and stands on little patent leather feet of not more than six inches in length.

To the visitor the city seems a very large place, but cabs are cheap and of two kinds, the covered “four-wheelers,” which are studiously avoided by foreigners because reputed as only used by the sick, and possibly infectious, *en route* to the hospital—of course an exaggeration—and the hooded victoria, the latter divided into two classes: the supposedly superior No. 1, with pale-blue marks of distinction, and No. 2, with its badges of red; but

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never could I find out why blue was blue or red was red. Sometimes one was good, sometimes the other, often both were extremely bad, with wretched little tats of horses and broken harness : nearly as bad as that behind which I found myself one time on a car in Ireland, when my driver took to racing another car down a hill, and remarked to me casually, when in full gallop, that “indade it’s wonderful it do be holdin’ tegither at all, seein’ it was only last month me father tied up the trace wid an old piece o’ cord.”

But there are plenty of good horses too, and the excellent service of electric tram-cars through the town and neighbourhood is a great boon, so there is little difficulty in getting anywhere.

Here again there are two qualities, first- and second-class cars. At the beginning I could not imagine why my friends were so “haughty” about the

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second-class, letting them go by while they waited for a first, until one day by accident I got into a second-class myself, and never shall I forget it: not only was it full, very full, of dirty people, that was by no means all, the floor—but no, let me draw a veil—words fail: this in the best part of the town.

Perhaps I was unlucky, I hope so.

Unlucky I certainly was when a day after my arrival I tendered a ten-dollar note<sup>1</sup> in payment for stamps in the great central post-office, and was handed back my change all in five- and ten-cent pieces by a very magnificent person in a black frock-coat, embroidered waistcoat, and heavy gold watch-chain. This was equivalent to getting the change of a sovereign in penny and twopenny nickel bits—if such there were. Now I was new to the coinage—as no doubt he guessed—and remon-

<sup>1</sup> A Mexican dollar is roughly worth two shillings in English money.

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strated, asking for larger money, but he said he had none; so I had to set to and try to make heaps of these wretched little coins and add them together with a number of people pressing round behind me and passing their hands over my shoulders for two-cent and five-cent stamps. Frankly, arithmetic is not my strongest point, and when I am flustered my calculating mind becomes a blank, a void, so after a few vain attempts I gave it up, swept the lot into my pocket and went home, to find that I was five dollars short—done out of ten shillings by that very smart gentleman.

No doubt it was not the first time he had played the game. I should have greatly enjoyed frightening him by the threat of gaol and the sight of a policeman, but of course I had no way of proving my case, my friend would have sworn I gave him five dollars instead of ten, and they told me no policeman could

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have been induced to accompany me into the post-office to identify him.

But as a rule I was very well treated by everybody, indeed people seemed anxious to help me in all possible ways, from the railway conductor who invited me to dine with him, to the very smart young man that I met in that same post-office on another occasion when I had a number of invitations in my hand, and who offered to lick my stamps for me!

The word "gaol" has the direst effect on the Mexican, and is often sufficient to extort confession from the offender and restoration from the thief; and no wonder, for Belem, as it is called, is, I am told, a place of horrible, narrow, crowded cells, which are generally so filled with wretched prisoners that they cannot sit or lie down, filthy places hardly ever cleaned out and the sanitation *nil*. The most frequent result of incarceration here is cholera or typhoid, and while I

## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

was in the country people had become quite hopeful that this direful abuse might be remedied because the Governor of the State in paying a visit of inspection had caught typhoid and nearly died of it.

There, when a man is arrested—and anyone can be arrested in the street on the accusation of another—he is placed for thirty-six hours before he can communicate with anybody, claim protection, or clear himself at all.

One after another, most cruel cases were related to me, until I felt that one should walk the streets in terror lest one had made an enemy and that enemy should conceive a charge.

A very respectable working-man was once missed from a factory, disappearing wholly without a trace, and was accidentally seen some months later in Belem by one of his employers who had gone to look for some one else. He was so overwhelmed with shame at being put in

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this dreadful place at the instigation of an evil-wisher, and so convinced that he had no chance of clearing himself, that he had given a false name and address and was working out his sentence secretly.

It is a strange piece of benighted barbarism that lingers in spite of the beneficial government of a most enlightened President. For, as is well known, President Diaz has practically "made" the country by his wise and strong rule, which has brought peace and prosperity for so many years; but there are still some glaring abuses to be remedied that no civilized country ought to tolerate.

The Church festivals are kept with great fervour: at Christmas, which is called "La noche buena" (the good night), the shops and streets are full of preparations, countless stalls are set up wherever there is space and filled with endless varieties of little cheap figures, vases, pots, and sweetmeats; ornaments and streamers are carried about for sale

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## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

slung on poles; the pavements are as thick with people as in London, and the streets—for their width—nearly as full of carriages and motors.

I was glad to get out of it all to my work by the Viga Canal, where I found a subject isolated by ditches—or waterways—on three sides and therefore free from the usual crowd pressing round—a quaint little bridge connecting the market-gardens and the owners' little houses, over one of the small waterways of which there are so many about here that the place is almost as much entitled to the name "floating gardens" as those more distinctly such at Xochimilco.

One meets the most amusing contrasts in dress, etc.: a man in a flannel shirt—dirty at that—and no collar, waistcoat, or coat, wore gloves and a watch-chain. A beautiful creature in a tram-car, a dream of physical perfection with a handsome face and extremely well dressed had the most filthy hands and nails possible.

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The women are generally short but often well made ; they usually have fine eyes and plenty of black hair, and their eyelashes—as with the men—are long, thick, and up-curved. Noses are sometimes very straight and fine—I fancy an Indian type—but mostly too widespread at the nostril, and nearly all the mouths are coarse, or at any rate large and thick-lipped.

When men friends meet they throw their arms around each other, do not kiss, but pat each other's backs vigorously. It has a very comical effect to the foreigner, especially when done slowly and solemnly by two large stout men in the conventional black coat and bowler hat of the city. When two "charros" do it (who I think may be described as country "bucks") it seems quite natural and right—though new!

Women of the city and its neighbourhood are given to over-dress : feathers,

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flowers, ribbons of all colours crowded on their dresses and hats. But the women of the country are charming in the almost universal *reboso* or shawl worn over the head or round the shoulders and thrown back across the left; blue of a dull shade is the most frequent colour, but black predominates in some parts, and occasionally one meets delightful warm purples, or dull-patterned things of no particular hue, and just now and again a white.

I regret to say there is a horrible bluish-pink of a most unpleasant brilliancy which is distinctly a favourite for skirts, but as a rule the petticoats are sober in tone or light and colourless. Too often they are long and trail, regardless of what they trail through or what dust they kick up; for there is dust everywhere, thick, thick dust on all the country roads, through all the village streets, and even in the woods where vegetation has not conquered it.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CUERNAVACA

THE journey from the city to Cuernavaca is fascinating. A high ridge of mountains has to be crossed—the mountains that surround Mexico City making of it almost a basin in spite of its high altitude—the railway winds up by many a twist and turn, giving one ever fresh views of the lovely plain below with its town and domes and clusters of outlying suburb, its lakes and its avenues of trees, united by the stretches of ground that would be bare but for the maguey-plants, and dull in colour but for the impalpable haze that hangs over the distance and lends delicate hues in the afternoon light.

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I do not know what this haze is, for one is told—and one feels—that the climate is dry on the whole, yet there it is and one can only guess at some combination of heat and vibration and dust and maybe a little wraith arising from the invisible water buried beneath, the survival of the widespreading lake of mediaeval times which now only appears in the Viga Canal and its belongings and the small lakes to the east and south-east.

As one nears the top, the woods dwindle away to bareness and great stretches of rank grass, pale ochre and silver in colour, and after a stop at Tres Marias (Three Marys)—a curious name for a bleak little place on a high mountain—one is suddenly thrilled by a view of the other side, a panorama of rich plain surrounded by wonderful hills, some rugged and broken — masses of rock—others piled up in the shapes of castles





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and fortifications; more are distant and smooth and blue, the lower ones covered with woods, and against the eastern sky rise Popocatapetl and Ixtaccihuatl, pure and serene.

I saw all this in the sunset light when the panorama was a sea of rose and grey, violet, and gold, the hills dimly standing out like islands, with here and there a mysterious greenish gleam which I at first took for water, but which turned out to be fields of sugar-cane whose green is so pale and illusive in that light as to appear like weird and marginless lakes.

Down we went zigzagging through the rocks and hills with passing visions of ghostly vegetation, thorny mimosas, up-standing everlastings, or tall flowering grasses delicately touched with light, or silhouetted dark against the grey dimness below, until with a very shrill announcement of our approach we steamed into the station of Cuernavaca, and were con-



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veyed by rough little victorias round the sharp turns of the road and down the stony streets of the little town, chiefly one-storied houses and many churches, into the market-place.

My hotel was a most romantic place at night, with its two inner patios or courtyards full of plants and bushes and creepers and open to the deep blue of the myriad-starred sky.

It had a very large and extended flat roof which gave one a complete circular view of that varied and beautiful country, except where it is interrupted by the silhouette of the grand old cathedral and numerous other churches. One counts thirteen domes and towers and cupolas against the glorious sunsets that vary their wonderful pageantry every night, culminating in an afterglow whose beauty left me breathless and almost crushed, so amazing was it in its ever-varying and astounding colour-combination. One of

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the simplest phases of these I was constrained to try and reproduce, although I knew it to be impossible and my audacity colossal.

But the more the artist feels a thing, the more difficult it is, bracing him up to his utmost powers, the better chance he has of producing something vital, something perhaps even beyond himself, now and again. So he tries repeatedly and makes many failures, but works on always hoping, and occasionally rewarded by a gleam in his picture of what he meant to do.

Knowing that I should have quantities of odds and ends of work to finish up indoors I insisted on having a room with none but the early morning sun, and this, at my price, was only to be found in an annexe of the hotel, just along the street with a door of its own which I had to padlock each time I left it.

Being an Irishwoman I would describe

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the only window as a glass door, which was nicely curtained. There was indeed another door, a heavy double wooden one at least three inches thick, twelve feet high, and fastened by an immense wooden bar which swung across the two doors into sockets, showing the house to be an old one when doors were defences. But this was securely fastened up; leaving however a keyhole and a couple of knot-holes free. I did not discover these at once, until one morning I heard mysterious sounds at the door while I was at my toilet—and could clearly discern three human eyes at the holes. When I reached my glass door there was nothing visible but three pairs of legs disappearing round a corner.

I stuffed up the apertures with paper and continued my dressing, when I heard a scraping and poking and behold out came the paper and three eyes were again there! This time the stopping consisted

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of old painting rag crammed in tight with a brush-handle, and when an incredible amount of precious painting rag had been expended I felt secure, and though a long pointed instrument was brought and much labour bestowed on the other side, my fortifications stood the siege.

When I wanted to paint there the glass door had to stand wide open to give light, but I was kindly provided with a low three-fold screen which hid me and my easel from the passers-by, though there were generally some sharp enough to find out what I was at and shove an inquiring head round the screen. Now and again one stayed quite a long time craning his neck for a peep, and one man sat down on the step where he had a two-inch view and stayed for hours watching. I found out afterwards that he was the chief ceiling-painter of the place.

There was no means of airing the room at night when the door was shut, so I

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asked the manager could anything be done. Oh, yes! he said, and promptly had two great circles drilled in the upper panels, giving the air free access and me two circular pictures of deep blue sky and twinkling stars at night, and rounds of awakening light in the early morning. There was no bell in the room, so many were my vicissitudes—when the hot water in the morning was forgotten and my only way of attracting attention was to march up the street in my dressing-gown to the front door; or when I was laid up for a few days from the effects of the water or food and entirely dependent on the memory of a little Indian servant who brought me in milk at odd times.

The town is full of churches, and the accompanying one stands in a corner of the cathedral square, the old wall and gateway of which delighted me. The people have a way of painting the walls of their houses and churches in colour-





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wash which at first is rather crude, but when it has undergone a few summer rains tones down into something very pleasant and is varied by the mildew and damp of the monsoon times.

Cuernavaca is bordering on "hot country," as it is only about 5,000 feet high, and there are more palms and orange-trees and more white clothes about than in the higher regions.

The streets are full of picturesque bits, but a crowd collected directly one put up one's easel, and after twelve o'clock when the children got out from school things became unbearable.

An American painter told me that he nearly got into a bad row when—his patience being exhausted—he applied to a policeman for help to keep the people off. So I did not venture on anything of the kind, but if polite speeches and requests failed I packed up and took myself off.



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Now and then I found a quiet lane where I had comparative peace and could work in a beneficent state of mind, and occasionally the company of a "brother brush" made the nuisance less.

The oleander-trees which bordered many of the streets were in full bloom, big rosy double flowers that made glorious colour, and there were bushes of delicate blue plumbago, and tall shrubs covered with the handsome white trumpets of the datura—whose wonderful odour is almost too strong at times—and roses and geraniums.

Everywhere too masses of bougainvillea, but the colour of this is generally more distress than pleasure to the artist, as it seems to harmonize with nothing and is so strong in tone that it positively jumps at one from supporting walls, with its almost leafless abundance of crude colour. I can conceive it looking rather well some way off with the purples and mauve pinks





## CUERNAVACA

of a quiet sunset, but it was not my good fortune to see it so, and though I felt it to be one of the most marked characteristics of the town, was only guilty of painting it once in connexion with a white dome and a grey sky.

One morning I was most unfortunate in my choice of a painting-ground. I took a fancy to a view of the town seen from outside with fine morning clouds rising behind, but soon found I was in close proximity to the general slaughtering-place; bones of all sorts lay around, great black buzzards flocked towards one spot, or perched in rows on a wall near by when they were satiated and felt constrained to doze off the results of their debauch, or spread their wings to catch the full warmth of the sun; and when I went home it was quite alarming to pass numbers of large wild-looking dogs who growled at me with red eyes as they devoured portions of carcasses by the way.

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Out in the country one saw hedges of a very beautiful large white double rose with a dash of warm cream and yellow in its heart, but whether this is indigenous or introduced by the Spaniards I could not ascertain, as both views were strongly stated to me backed by apparent proofs.

The great upstanding double and single marigolds of every shade of yellow and orange, growing three or four feet high and flowering luxuriantly—the largest and most feathery kinds I ever saw—were here and there by the side of the road, or bordering a field. Apparently the Mexicans look upon them in the same light as the people of India, consider them suitable for all religious purposes and make garlands of them for saints and coffins indiscriminately.

But I need not go on enumerating the flowers of Mexico, for a reference to any floral catalogue shows the numbers of flowers that come from that country,





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owing no doubt to the varied altitude and therefore unusual variety of temperatures in a tropical clime.

It was in vain that I attempted to get anyone to carry my kit for me when the heat of the day made it a burden. Boy after boy did I engage, or was engaged for me, and at their own price, but never did the lazy rogues keep their appointment. The whole time I was in Mexico I never succeeded in getting anyone to carry my things, unless I found some one myself in the street and shoved them into his hands bidding him come alongside me and promising centavos.

I carried a few off their feet in this way before they had time to protest, but they were few, and in consequence my perambulations were generally limited to the reach of my own tether as a beast of burden.

Near to the Borda Gardens the church entrance opposite fascinated me with its



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colour-scheme of pinkish stone and green door in combination with the pink and green of the oleander-tree beside it.

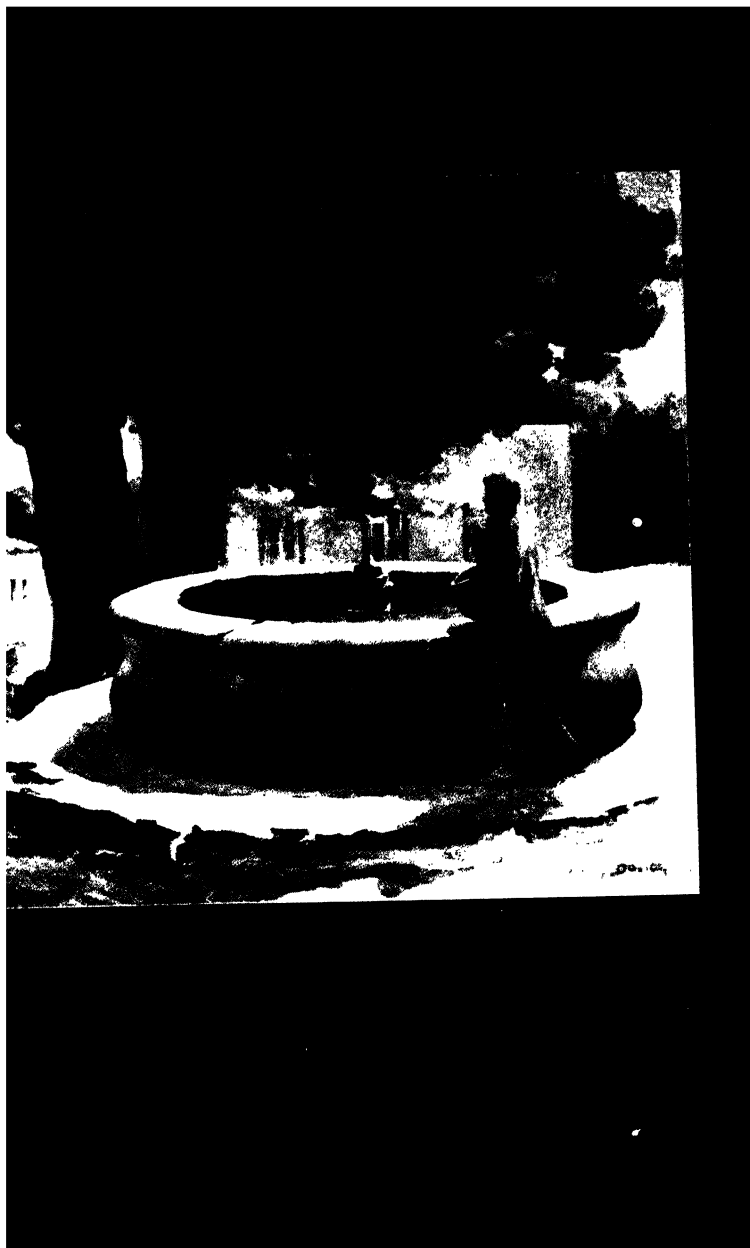
The Borda Gardens is a delightful place on a hot day with its heavy over-green and channels and basins of water. It was made by a local millionaire, and is now open to the public at a small charge.

Cuernavaca was Cortes' favourite place of residence, and the fine solid building well situated at the end of the upper town, looking over the plains below to the surrounding hills, was his palace, and is now the State Capitol, and most unhappily added to and spoilt by philistines of a later day.

During the Empire the town was the summer capital and the unfortunate Maximilian had a pleasant villa in the neighbourhood.

Although I spent a month in Cuernavaca I was so much occupied with my painting that I failed to do the various





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pleasant expeditions recommended me in the country around ; most have to be done on horseback through scrub and rocks and up heights at a walking pace, which takes much time.

A little village in the neighbourhood called Tlaltenango is very attractive. One climbs uphill to it all the way from Cuernavaca, and finds there a most quaint church with a campanile and large entrance gate, surrounded by cypress trees—real Italian *cipressi*—and a fountain under splendid trees.

## CHAPTER IX

### PATZCUARO—CONUY

A RETURN to Mexico City and a short visit and rest at our Legation revealed to me anew the comfort of a well-ordered house and the advantages of good food!

My next journey was to Patzcuaro—"place of pleasure"—passing through Morelia on the way, interesting with its great market of fruit and vegetables, etc., and a beautiful place of large trees and flowers beside an old aqueduct outside the town.

Churches in numbers, of course, for this is one of the hotbeds of ecclesiasticism and priestly authority.

Lake Patzcuaro reminded me of Como because of its Y shape, with its high hills rising from it on all sides and its

## PATZCUARO—CONUY

little islands. One or two of these are very pretty with trees or a little village and church tower.

The views of the lake from the town which stands back and high above it are very fine, and by the edge of the lake its ever-varying aspects from clear opal to threatening grey, from cloudless blue to the gorgeous views of sunset make it a fascinating study, and offer such attractions to venture on it and explore as make strong temptations to idleness for the artist.

And the duck-shooting! How it would make the mouth of the stay-at-home English sportsman water! Numbers of the birds in every direction: blue-backs, pin-tails, red-heads, spoon-bills, mallard, snipe, and tern—in fact, almost every variety of duck known in North America—and some closely resembling canvas-backs and every bit as good to eat. There is just enough difficulty in getting at them—for they are very wary—to make the sport exciting.

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Of course morning and evening brought the best bags, but even in broad noon-day a very fair one can be had.

The lake is the highest navigable water on the continent of America except Yellowstone Lake, and the boats on it are "dug-out" canoes all in one piece, which are propelled and steered by paddles, often by the women while the men sit idly in the prow or stern.

A place rejoicing in the name of Tzintzuntzan is reported to possess a genuine Titian, but the reproductions that I saw of it did not inspire me to undertake the long expedition necessary to see it—a three hours' row there and three back, possibly more with the wind contrary.

There were constant winds on the water, but when it is calm it is so calm that everything is exactly doubled below, and one realizes the curious charm that reflections exercise on almost every one, artist and unobservant alike.

But it was here that my troubles with

## PATZCUARO—CONUY

dust, the terrible universal dust of Mexico, began. There were hours when the whole panorama of hills and lake were blotted out, and the colour even of near objects swept away, or rather changed into one monotonous hue of grey-fawn; and this was not a dust-storm or anything amounting to it, just a windy, dusty day. For when the greater part of the country's surface is loose and sandy, not even the presence of large lakes can prevent the air being filled with particles once the wind rises.

Patzcuaro evokes too my coldest memories of Mexico, for the mornings and evenings were distinctly cold at that altitude—over 7,000 feet—by the lake-side, with gaps in the wood flooring of the little house in which I stayed which was raised on piles a few feet above the earth, so that one could see the weeds and stones underneath one's bedroom, and where the only sitting place was an open veranda.



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But such pageantry of sky and cloud, of moon and stars and night sky as one saw from that veranda! The accompanying picture was my view, and wondrous clouds rolled up almost every afternoon behind the hills and group of eucalyptus-trees.

A grove of these latter stood on each side, planted only twelve years before, yet now making deep dark woods of a good height.

What matter if there were no butter, and seldom any bread—only tortillas, the thin fried cakes of Indian-meal—meat that you barely got your teeth through, and milk that you were afraid to use as it had not been boiled? Were there not always eggs, inevitably served with a mixture of rice and tomatoes, and fruit—chirimoyas, grenaditas, and oranges; coffee, too, if you did not object to its being made from essence, probably imported from the States, although some





## PATZCUARO—CONUY

of the best possible coffee is grown in the immediate neighbourhood.

But if you are a Mexican why trouble to make or prepare anything when you can procure it already prepared for you, even though it be at double the cost?

Yes, Patzcuaro was "a place of pleasure." (Literal translation.)

•

In the hills farther west lies a small and beautiful lake, whose water is of a curious turquoise-green colour, difficult to account for and quite unchangeable no matter what the weather, and it is reputed bottomless! certainly of great depth.

The railway passes over a range of high hills by many doublings and turnings and even loops, and brings one into a green forest country where I alighted at a little station, and getting on mule-back (by which all my luggage

## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

went too) rode off with my host through lanes and rocky scrub to a height where there stretched before me a magnificent panorama of mountains, range after range, ridge upon ridge melting away behind each other in tones of violet and blue till they joined a great serrated wall with an edge like a crocodile's teeth—the last before the Pacific Ocean about eighty miles away.

One pictured the wonderful valleys and ravines (called *barrancas* in Mexico) that must lie between, and the gigantic forests on the slopes of those great hills, places impossible to penetrate except on horse-back, and that with difficulty; some fertile with coffee and sugar plantations, others probably as primeval nature had left them

One felt one was on the top of everything—on the heights of the world, and I gazed longingly towards the Pacific wishing I had time to emerge on that side and see its shores.

## PATZCUARO—CONUY

We passed through a typical village, Tingumbato, whose houses all had gardens and plenty of flowers, and where the public washing - place was picturesque (the water carried through two hollowed trunks of trees, which were surrounded by the women washing, and which also acted as drinking-troughs for the cattle and horses and goats)—and arrived for a late tea at Conuy.

Next morning I rode up a mountain to see some of the giant trees: oaks and pines, but very different from our oaks and pines, the oaks growing straight and slim and tall, the foliage unlike ours and only apparent as oaks from the acorns they bore.

The pines were magnificent, but they were all so fine together that one could only judge their height and size by measuring an average trunk at the bottom, when one got a surprise from the width.

Glimpses of blue mountains and dis-

## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

tance through these trees as they clothed the steep slopes suggested a series of great pictures, which would be entrancing to attempt, but, alas! they were at too great a distance from my centre—the roof that so hospitably covered me.

The roads were all deep masses of dust, twelve and eighteen inches deep, and up on the rough mountain tracks, cut only for the passage of the oxen dragging logs—for we were in the thick of a great lumber business—it was a deep red colour, and we rode in a cloud of it, which rose behind us in thick billows and splashed from our horses' feet as if it were mud, almost swamping a devoted dog who insisted on following his master.

Part of our way was taken up through scrub and rock on a steep slope. I believed in the sure-footedness of my steed, but it was very tiring bending continuously over the horse's neck, or holding one's two arms in front of one's face to keep

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off the branches and thorns. Very hot, too, so much exertion in the sun and dust, but I would not have missed it for anything, so entirely new and wonderful was it to me, this riding through primeval forest on steep mountain-sides, 8,000 feet above the sea.

Not like the usual high forest lands where there are only pines and cold zone vegetation, but a mass of semi-tropical verdure, great solanums and arbutilons, and purple tree-lupins in full flower, with a myriad others which I could not name at the feet of the glorious trees, and here and there a ravine, one ravishing mass of ferns and greenery.

If I had not gone that morning I should never have seen this loveliness, for subject after subject claimed me below and I had barely time to finish what I began.

Every morning and afternoon I rode off to my painting-grounds accompanied by a sort of hidalgo of the lumber camp, who, I am bound to say, appeared to think



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the job quite beneath him, this attending on a foolish woman creature who made messes on paper. But fortunately time is of little value to the Mexican, and if he found some one to gossip with on the vagaries of the *forasteros* in general, all was one to him.

One morning a train near me was being laden with logs by dozens of coolies (they lay a railway here with less thought than we make a path at home) when by their own carelessness in omitting to shore up the wheels with stones, the wagons started down the incline without an engine and with numbers of the men inside. Then ensued an indescribable scene; logs falling about, brown and white figures leaping from the trucks and wagons and shouting wildly at the tops of their voices, while the train steadily increased in speed and rushed past me to a turn in the road, where crash! it fell over the bank into a *barranca*, some trucks on the line, some off, a couple of wagons smashed and

## PATZCUARO—CONUY

piled together in confusion, but all the men had jumped off in time and no one was hurt.

This country, like so many other parts of Mexico, is largely volcanic in its origin, and in one place in the forest called the *Malpais*—the reason of which is obvious for verdure is sparse—the soil is of little or no depth, yet the trees are as fine and tall as ever. Apparently they like the basaltic support, indeed the trees from here are among the best.

The clearing away of these forest beauties is very sad, and one can only hope Nature is as rapid in replacing them as she is reported to be; on the other hand, a big lumber camp is a very interesting business with its great saw-mills turning out thousands of planks and sleepers daily, its gear for bringing great logs down the mountain-side, its puffing trains winding up and down the hills, and the wood lore that oozes out of all those concerned in it.

## CHAPTER X

### POPO PARK—AMECAMECA

ON my way back I stayed a night at a place called Acambaro in a truly Mexican inn, the bedrooms all on the ground-floor opening off a square *patio* or garden. The floors were brick, and the furniture of the scantiest, but the bed was clean and passably restful, at any rate far better than travelling by night and experiencing the joys of a Pullman-car!

The food was as usual extremely poor; indeed, if one cannot eat tough beef one fares badly in Mexico, for there is little else to be had in country places. However, I was cheered by the talk of a lively French proprietress, who gave me "the lovely climate" as her reason for not going back to her beloved country in her old age.

## POPO PARK—AMECAMECA

I wandered about the one-storied town and saw an interesting church with fine doors and splendid ash-trees in the yard outside, which was surrounded by a quaint wall and gateways.

Everywhere in this country there are stalls of sweet things and candied fruits. The one or two I ventured on tasted good but terribly sweet, and when one thinks of the unwashed hands that made them one is very cautious and prefers to sample fruits that have rind and peel to be removed.

From Acambaro to the city the way lay through a beautiful country of mountain and plain, creeping up and up until we came to El Oro, the great mining centre, which from the train looked a small and unimportant place to be turning out such riches.

It was nearly dark as we came down the mountain-sides into the city, and tantalizing glimpses were vouchsafed to me of the beauty on each side.

## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

Another short stay in the city produced another avenue picture, a double row of some kind of poplar which ran off the Tlalpam road apparently into nowhere, but doubtless was really a useful by-way, as numbers of mule-carts and peasants carrying burdens passed me as I worked.

For a while I was more or less oblivious to the fact that there were numbers of orange and black caterpillars about, until I felt a large one flop on my hat, and then discovered they were crawling over my dress, up the supports of my easel, and even on my paint-box. From that moment it was one continuous warfare with caterpillars every day that I came back to my interesting subject; no sooner had I got them all off me and swept to one side of the road, than more dropped from the branches above and crawled over me again. The trees were infested with them, and nowhere could I get out of their reach; so I was not

## POPO PARK—AMECAMECA

surprised when going home the tram-conductor came and told me there was one on the back of my neck, which he kindly removed and crushed with a remorseless heel.

They were very like the kind that lives in a sort of haggis-bag in trees on the Riviera, and which when it breaks forth walks in a continuous line head to tail devouring every thing green *en route*. It is said to cause an eruption if disturbed on your flesh, so I treated the Mexican ones with deference.

Some pleasant evenings in the city—dinners, bridge, and several cinematographs—and I was off again to the country.

A house which stands in a large park, and has a little siding of its own on the railway, is Popo Park Hotel. Though there is a valley between its table-land

## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

and the great mountains, they appear to rise over it in close proximity.

Beautiful grand Popocatapetl (see frontispiece) is seen from that in all his magnificence, and as one stays from day to day beside him his importance seems to swell until he fills one's whole view and most of one's thoughts. The peak, the summit, with its perpetual snow is so fine, the steep rocky sides so large and vast, and the sweeps of wooded slope and lower foot-hills so exactly right and proportionate, leading up to the glory above, that the deep impression grows daily with closer knowledge.

It is almost an effort to detach one's thought and transfer it to Ixtaccihuatl, the wondrous spouse close by. Her charms are entirely different. Rising from multitudinous ravines, her innumerable ridges and cliffs and peaks lead gradually and imperceptibly into the soft masses of snow at the top—so different







## POPO PARK—AMECAMECA

from Popocatepetl's clear line of white—to the broken irregular summit with an outline which from some points suggests a woman's form. But this or her name, meaning "white woman," is little needed to emphasize her sex. Her complexity, her illusiveness, her endless change of subtle light and colour make it quite plain, in contradistinction to the big simple grandeur of the peak not far off.

The woods in that part were all macrocarpus, a cedar which is only picturesque in old age; or in battered isolation such as that weird trio in the foreground of my picture which at last determined me to attempt the impossible and paint Ixtaccihuatl, giving the necessary *clou* to an otherwise chaotic study of mountains.

These trees, ever reminiscent to me of the so-called "ornamental" ones of a park or grounds at home—an abomination to the artist—gave me neither

## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

pleasure nor shade worth having, and had their feet in deep sand, which supported little growth of verdure. There was a straggling bush with clusters of small red and yellow trumpets, and many scrubby plants of tree-lupin—very different from their tall growth on the hills of Conuy. But in the open there was nothing, beyond an occasional plant of a strange and rather beautiful white thistle-poppy.

The 17th of March was passed here, but never a bit of anything could I find that might be construed into the semblance of shamrock, although I had seen trefoils closely resembling it in other parts of Mexico.

I had found it impossible to obtain any definite information about the inn at Amecameca, where I wanted to stay and paint on the Sacramonte, but I went back there on chance, thinking that whatever it was like I could put up with it

## POPO PARK—AMECAMECA

for a night or so. (One has these foolish imaginings from time to time.)

Fortunately I took a morning train, for when with great difficulty I had got my baggage and painting kit balanced on the heads and backs of several small boys—nothing larger in the shape of a porter presenting itself—and marched off to the one and only inn, my heart sank into my boots and the deep dust of the place.

The narrow doorway opened straight into the living room whose apparently clay floor (it might have been anything coated with dirt) was littered everywhere with all the necessities of a kitchen and life in general. Vegetables and their parings, bones and chicken feathers mingled pleasingly with refuse and dirty sacks, and a group of girls and boys seated on the floor laughing and talking at the tops of their voices.

A terrible-looking hag received me unctuously, and when I inquired for a

## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

room ushered me up a ladder stair in the corner to a large room with a bed and doors opening off it. There had been one other passenger to Amecameca by my train, and he I found had arrived first and secured the room into which the stairway emerged, I being offered one which opened off it with a door which not only had no lock, *but would not shut!*

The only furniture in the room besides the bed was a wire basin-holder, so feeling that even the possibilities of a barricade would be denied me, I turned to go, saying that I feared the accommodation would not suit me, and was immediately confronted by the hag in a fury, demanding in a series of shouts what was wrong with her rooms, and supported by all my porter boys vociferating that there was no other inn and no other train and a few more comfortable things of like nature, reinforced from below by some of the loungers and the

## POPO PARK—AMECAMECA

newly arrived guest, who all assured me that I should be in the height of comfort.

But presenting a front of severe determination (which was really a condition of fright inside) I insisted upon departing, piling my luggage again on the boys' backs, and stalked out followed by execrations.

Back at the station I found there was an evening train to Cuautla, and that I could have dinner before going, in a sort of drinking-place kitchen, where the station-master—who was most polite and became quite a friend before that long evening of waiting was over—assured me the food was "*muy bueno*."

So I set off to inspect the Sacramento. Through the branches of cypress-trees—a kind which hangs its needles in seaweedy bunches and festoons—there were beautiful glimpses of the mountains, Popo and Ixtaccihuatl, showing new profiles and new beauties.

## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

One comes to a monastery near the top, and from that wide steps lead up to the shrine, bushes at the sides bearing remains of clothing and old hats and pieces of human hair, left by pilgrims, who come up the whole way on their knees I am told.

It is the shrine of a holy man who lived on this hill. Campbell's guide-book says—"He was Fray Martin de Valencia, one of the twelve apostles of Mexico sent by Pope Adrian VI as a missionary to the Indians with the title of Vicar of New Spain. He lived in a cave and was so gentle and kind that the little birds came and sang to him, and the little animals of the forest played about his door and followed close on his footsteps. The Fray was greatly beloved by the people, and when he died and was buried at Tlalmanalco, it is said that the Indians secretly removed and buried him in the cave where he had lived so happily."

## POPO PARK—AMECAMECA

Sitting on the summit of this isolated hill, looking down on the spreading town of Amecameca and the great flat country round and then up to the magnificent peaks behind, glorious in the evening light, I watched them until the gold turned to rose and faded away, to be replaced by a fainter, more ethereal, rose, and then by the cold blue white of twilight, in which their snowy tops became ghostly and remote.

The so-called restaurant was a very primitive place, and the food almost uneatable; especially when one caught glimpses through a door of the place where it was cooked. The only thing I dared drink was a bottle of lemonade of a dark-brown colour and strong in flavour.

When that was over it was time for the train, but it did not come. At last I went into the station-master's office and borrowed a stool, that being the only



## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

seat I could find apart from the odorous "restaurant."

So the weary time passed while I dangled my legs from my high perch and held a limited and spasmodic conversation with the station-master or telegraph-clerk, or watched American or English gangers come in with their weekly accounts of labour (for it was Saturday—hence the lateness of the train), apparently unable to speak a word of Spanish and making passes and signs.

At last with much puffing and snorting and spitting out fire on all sides, in rolled the train, clanging a noisy ear-splitting bell—a bell which is suspended over the engine and rung by law whenever the engine enters or leaves a station or crosses a road—and I embarked for Cuautla.

Not having contemplated going to Cuautla so soon, I was not well posted in the data of the place, so took the

## POPO PARK—AMECAMECA

advice of the train-conductor as to hotels, and he kindly offered to look after me when we arrived and show me the way to the hotel. So I curled up and went to sleep, only waking to find the train at a standstill, and myself the only occupant of the carriage, except a man who was sweeping out the dust! Oh faithless conductor!

Fortunately Cuautla is a terminus, but in a nice state of mind I hopped out and could find no *cargador* (porter), though I wandered down the whole length of the station, so came back and appealed to the sweeper for help. After some demur he shouldered my baggage and off we set to look for the hotel—of which he had never heard!

Now Mexicans, if they go to bed at all (which in some places I have doubted—I have heard a gramophone started at three o'clock in the morning), go early, and it was now nearly midnight. So we

## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

only met a few odd stragglers in the streets who did not seem to have any clear idea where the hotel was but directed us volubly, and we wandered on endlessly in streets that all looked the same, following directions that brought us to no hotel; at last when I was so weary that I felt I could hardly last much longer, and my burdened companion was muttering swear-words, we met a respectably dressed man who said we were coming away from the hotel and that it was opposite the station!

Wearily we plodded back again and rang up a sleepy porter, and I was shown across a garden *patio* which looked ghostly and mysterious in the dim light, to a bare room, where I soon tumbled into bed. There were moments of terror when I saw something dark on the sheet—only a bit of fluff, and something moving on the wall—only ants.

What a day!

## CHAPTER XI

### CUAUTLA

ALSO, what a night! By this time I ought to have been accustomed to the insect population of Mexico, but in spite of almost nightly "shikar" I could never get over the recoil and shudder when hopping or flat brown objects were revealed on the sheets, and invariably went through a process of extermination and lavish sprinkling of Keating before retiring to rest, neither of which were really much use.

The mosquitoes also kept me busy that night—and most nights in Cuautla, for this is "hot country."

It was indeed hot, and I found paint-

## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

ing in the street—even in the shade—almost more than I could stand. But San Diego—an old monastery turned into a railway-station!—made such a good subject that I daily returned to the sweltering street and the chattering crowd, which, alas! for many reasons it was impossible to forget in one's work.

Near by I found a delightful *patio*<sup>1</sup> which rejoiced me with its colour and cooled me with a pleasant draught under an archway. The proprietress was greatly excited over the picture, and she and all her family and belongings interviewed me repeatedly, but were never in the way. When I went in to say good-bye they asked to see the finished result, and pointed out with enthusiasm every detail that they could recognize; when I told them it was going to London to form part of an exhibition there with the

<sup>1</sup> Enclosed court-yard, which generally has flowers round it.





## CUAUTLA

other pictures of Mexico I was painting, they seemed thrilled.

The river—Rio Xuchitengo—runs near by, and I heard much of the exquisite view of the mountains seen from the bridge, but the haze of dust and heat had by now settled down over all distant views, and I could see nothing but the foreground and middle distance. So I contented myself with the river, very glad to get the chance of painting one, for hitherto I had not seen such a thing except passing in the train. The rivers of Mexico are few.

I made valiant efforts to secure a boy to carry for me in the heat, but only succeeded—as I said before—when I sallied forth in the morning and captured a lounging boy by surprise, thrusting my kit into his reluctant hand and bidding him follow me.

But one day all my attempts had failed and I was sadly trudging out



## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

along the dusty side-streets when I espied a small boy with the jolliest face imaginable, who eyed me with great but carefully veiled curiosity. I asked him would he like to earn some centavos, and he smiled yes, so I gave him some of my goods, which he slung over his small back in a masterly manner and off we went.

Conversation ensued, consisting mostly of syncopated information on his part about various things we passed, jerked up at me with a twinkle in his bright brown eyes, and a little crooked smile that bowled me over completely.

When I arrived at the river and put up my easel he squatted beside me, and finding further remarks unanswered, sat silent, and waited patiently for hours, keeping himself from overwhelming boredom by an occasional expedition to the slob-land below, where he had mysterious hunts for invisible objects; or by a show of proprietary

## CUAUTLA

pride in me when passers-by stopped to look and ejaculate.

But he was overjoyed when a plague of small flies drove me home, and as I followed behind my kit, which showed the top of a black head above and an inch or two of white pants and brown legs below, I thought I had secured a firm friend and ally, and when giving him his money I engaged him to come next day, which he promised to do with every sign of joy.

But next day came and no sign of my little friend, and I had to start without him, making all kinds of excuses for him in my mind, such as his mother having sent him on a message, or his being at school, etc., when I suddenly espied him *flâne-ing* in the dust, doing nothing in the world and looking very grubby; when he saw me he slunk away with an ashamed face.

## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

Later I found him creeping after me, and all the time I worked he was somewhere near by. What could have changed his mind about earning those pennies? Did his comrades tell him the job was *infra dig.*, or was I looked upon as a dangerous person, or what?

The mystery remained unsolved, and much hurt in my mind I failed to notice my friend on subsequent occasions.

'Twas ever thus, the brave deserts the fair!

## CHAPTER XII

### PUEBLA

T HENCE I betook me to Puebla and had a long, slow, hot, dusty journey that reminded me of those I had done in the plains of India in April—without the ameliorations.

I was within an ace of being left behind on the way; the train stopped dead at nowhere, so I bethought me of an accident I had just heard of, which befell a train stationary like ours on the main line, and where a man I knew only just saved himself by jumping from the window—the door refusing to open—when he saw a train rushing upon them from behind, I therefore hopped out on the shady side to watch events.

## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

After a long wait, when I had begun to despair of getting on, the train suddenly started without the slightest warning and with such a speed that I had to tear after it and jump up while it was going at a considerable pace, to the great excitement of every protruded head, and was received with a severe reprimand from an important-looking personage.

At Puebla so fagged out did I feel that I could see nothing that appealed to my brush, and did no work, but spent my days sight-seeing.

Fortunately I had a good cicerone, who had made a study of the interesting things there, and most kindly took me under his wing and showed me round.

So I saw many churches—and this is indeed a place of churches, innumerable domes and cupolas arise everywhere, roofed or faced with coloured tiles, rather disappointing in colour, but good in general effect.

## PUEBLA

There are wonderful tapestries in the sacristy of the cathedral given by Carlos V of Spain—the finest I have seen in point of richness of hue; fine inlaying too in the choir seats and canopies, etc. But as regards interiors, to me it is difficult to appreciate the beauties of proportion when they are overwhelmed with ornament and covered with bright gilding.

- One simple white-washed interior struck me as good, but chiefly because all the side altars with their horrible figures and artificial flowers were covered with pictured screens dropped down over them from the arches, which gave a pleasing look of uniformity and were harmonious and quiet in colour.

Mounting a tower of the cathedral, we passed a family living in a small room half-way up, but so great was the dirt we dared not linger, indeed the staircase was a thing to give one pause. But the

## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

view at the top was glorious—in spite of the mountains being hidden in a veil of dust—and the great pile and mass of the building below and around us very imposing.

Up there I caught sight of a curious old sun-dial which was on a parapet where no one is likely to go, and could only be seen from the tower we had climbed. It was a semicircle cut out like a bite from the thick upstanding stone edge; the hours were marked round the semicircle, six on each side, and the shadow of the stones' own thickness—each corner of the bite in turn—told the time, the wall facing east and west.

The library, a fine old place which was once a church, has thousands of ancient tomes, saved and sorted by a good bishop some hundred years ago, and housed in carved cases. It is used as an office.

In another church we stopped to listen

## PUEBLA

to an evening sermon preached by a most vigorous Jesuit, where numbers of the women squatted in the aisle on their haunches in preference to seats in the pews, and a fine mastiff lay calmly at the end of a pew with his head on his crossed paws.

What was really a calamity to me at Puebla was that the mountains were continuously covered, or rather blotted out by the thick dust hanging in the atmosphere. Once only at sunset did I catch a clear view of them, and then saw Malintzi, or Malinche (called after the lady who acted as "guide, interpreter, and wife" to Cortes), rising rose-red to the north-east, and Orizaba's peak in the far distance, while Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl and their accompanying ranges were silhouetted dark against the sinking sun.

Many of the houses in Puebla are faced with coloured tiles, generally blue and white, and I saw some extraordinary-



## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

looking houses decorated in a wild, mad manner; one that must have cost a mint of money had grotesque figures in relief of a most comical character, and had been quite lately built!

## CHAPTER XIII

### NECAXA

THE name Necaxa will always to me spell wonderful things. Firstly, because it is one of the most beautiful places I have ever seen, and one of the most amazing; secondly, because of the extraordinary kindness and consideration I received during my expedition there from every one connected with the big Company that owns the place.

It is true that the panorama of the Himalayas at Darjeeling, the mighty Kinchinjunga with the great ranges of mountains and foothills creates greater astonishment and excites more enthusiasm for its wondrous beauty; but the

## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

deep gorge of Necaxa, with its river fall of a thousand feet in one delicate silver curve, vanishing into mist before it reaches the rocks below, and the lovely foliage clothing the heights and slopes—so exceptional in its combination of semi-tropical and cold zone growth—added to the beautiful form of the table-topped uplands, make it especially captivating to the eye.

I was the guest of the Company which is making the great dam across that lovely valley, doing away with—alas!—that exquisite waterfall, and using the water-power for the engendering of electricity and its conveyance to Mexico City, and even more distant parts by overhead conduits.

I felt very important when I arrived at an up-country town in India and found a row of servants and a carriage and pair placed at my disposal by a native who was a complete stranger to me, and

## NECAXA

expeditions arranged for me with relays of horses, an elephant with a howdah, and various other kind attentions ; but never have I been so thoughtfully cared for as I was at Necaxa.

Beginning with the kindness that brought a motor to the Legation for me at 6 a.m., with a thermos bottle of freshly made hot tea to comfort me *en route* in the chilly morning air, everything was made easy and pleasant for me both on the journey and during the whole of my stay.

At Beristain, the terminus of the main railway, where the company has a camp and the Company's narrow-gauge line begins, I was met and taken to a house where an excellent luncheon awaited me.

From thence began what ought to have been an entrancing experience as the little railway wound and twisted up the long gorge and along the sides of the mountains to Necaxa. But for

## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

the first time in my Mexican travels the weather was not kind, and the whole way we steamed through a mist of rain—perished with cold—and could see nothing but the nearest trees and rocks.

Arriving, I was brought to the guest house and given a room opening on both sides to a veranda, which promised lovely views in the morning, and afterwards taken to a dining-room where I messed with some of the unmarried engineers.

Wrapped in a big coat from the damp, after dinner I leaned over the veranda, watching moving lights and figures in the semi-darkness below, which were most puzzling in their movements. Great flashlights from the heights threw their beams on what appeared to be gigantic hose throwing jets of water into the face of the hill-side. Yawning chasms, rents, and fissures were revealed in the weird light, and it seemed as if a mighty

## NECAXA

leviathan were being disembowelled under my eyes, the detonations of blasting, their reverberations and the roar of the falling earth and stones adding to the impression.

One figure clearly silhouetted in the lurid light appeared to be controlling this infernal attack on the monster—which I knew, alas! to be no monster at all, but God's beautiful hill-side.

Twinkling lights high up told where the village stood, and a gleam of water below where the lake lay, I being on a narrow, flat-topped ridge above all, where is the Company's camp. Burning with curiosity and overflowing with questions, thrilled with excitement, I could hardly go to bed; but it had been a very long, tiring day, and I soon slept.

The morning revealed continued mist and fine rain, and it was not until the following day that I was able to see all the beauty around me.

## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

However, a kind woman, wife of the chief engineer, came to call, and finding I was longing to explore, since I could not paint, took me for a ride.

The Company, which seemed to have everything that anyone could possibly want or wish for, sent up a horse with a side-saddle, I unfortunately not having learnt to ride astride like my American friends. It is much the most sensible way in this country of steep mountain tracks, where a false step on the animal's part, or the sudden meeting of pack-mules round a corner may make slipping off quickly on either side your only means of escaping a hurl into the gorge below.

I shall not easily forget a bad five minutes I had once, when my steed took fright at a blackened stump on a very narrow path, and half-turned round, his hind-legs slipping over the edge. He saved himself, but nothing would induce him to pass that stump. I talked to and

## NECAXA

patted and coaxed him, edging a little nearer, but always he swerved and the crumbling edge told me where his hoofs were. The *mozo* (servant) behind could do nothing, the path was so narrow, and it never struck me to get off, it would have been so difficult, also I felt I must conquer. In the end, when I had him almost smelling the inoffensive root, I gave him a smart cut, and whew! we were away.

- Our ride that first day was delightful in spite of the misty weather. We descended to the river-bed at the bottom of what used to be the first fall of the river, seven or eight hundred feet high, which no longer exists. It is replaced by the great dam, the small amount of water that is allowed to continue on its course after passing through a little valley like an ante-chamber, takes its beautiful leap of a thousand feet into the narrow gorge below.



## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

Then up again we climbed to the heights where we took a tangled pathway on the very brim of the precipice until we could look down on the gorge and just see the silver line of the fall in the abysmal depths.

There were roses for the picking and a shrub with a lovely pink flower that I cannot name. Coming home through a village we saw a cactus of an exquisite pale pink shade growing in clusters on a tree like an orchid. My arrival in Mexico was too late for the orchids, though at Orizaba there were a few large mauve flowers left on the tree-trunks; earlier in the season I am told there are numbers of beautiful ones to be seen. We were amused to see what looked like trussed pigs running about. They had a stick fastened through a ring in their noses to prevent them rooting through the light palisades which border the gardens and crops, and very comical they looked, poor little beasts.

## NECAXA

My companion took me back to tea in her house on the ridge, a jumping-off place by the edge of the chasm, looking into the infinity of distance—and I was introduced to a most sociable little community that showed me much friendliness and hospitality during my week's stay, all but one of its members being from the States.

Next morning I was off on my horse down the gorge, a *mozo* riding after me. It took quite an hour by a steep zigzag path to get to the bottom, which looked so near, below, and though it was early the heat as we got down became very great.

Wonderful and various was the vegetation. On the face of the cliff at my side where water was oozing through I counted fourteen different ferns in a few minutes; from handsome gigantic tropical creatures that are priceless at home, to polypody and spleenwort; from

## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

felix mas (or something that looked very like it) and pteris tremola to masses of maiden-hair. The trees too showed the same strange range, pines like the Austrian variety mingling with palms and dracænas, and all filled up with a tangle of creepers and aloes and lycopodium.

I imagine this is owing to the combination of tropical heat and cool damp at a high altitude.

There was little flower that I could see, at that season, but colour was not wanting, one had only to lift one's eyes to the view spread before one, to the tender blues of the distant hills, the violets and stronger blues of the gorge beneath, fold after fold embracing each other in melting beauty, and strengthening in colour till they were lost in the gold and green and rich browns of the near foreground.

At the bottom, unable to see how I could reach the foot of the fall, I went





## NECAXA

into the power house, and in the great noise caused by the generating engines found my hand warmly grasped by a Scotchman, and when I had shouted and yelled my desires I was conveyed to the bottom of the stupendous cliff, where the stream has ceased to be a stream, the fall is no longer water but dense, palpable mist; it sinks however into a large pool at the base which looked dark and green and fathomless, and is known to be of a great depth, a tremendous hole formed by the force of the volume of water that used to pour down here before its relentless force was tamed by weak man and subdued to his will.

It was impossible to get any complete view, the gorge was too narrow, the turns and corners too many; and I had to be content with a sketch done from some way up the road, showing only about one-half the height of the fall.

The formation of the edge of the cliff

## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

to the left looks as if at one time the whole plateau had water sweeping over its brim—a lesser Niagara. The size of it could be guessed by the trees on the plateau, which were great giant creatures a long way off, but very distinct in the clear air; distinct and yet veiled—the blue of atmospheric distance and yet clearly defined. But this atmosphere of Mexico I try vainly to describe, it must be seen to be understood.

I was taken over the great dam by the engineer in charge of it and shown the means of its construction. Those jets of water I observed the night of my arrival are brought with tremendous force from the heights above and turned on the face of the hill-side after it has been blasted and the rocks lie shattered, so as to sluice down the mass of clay, stone, and debris, which is then conveyed in “flumes” (continuous wooden troughs on trestles) to the middle of the dam. This is built

## NECAXA

of concrete and masonry on the inner side, and on the outer formed with a rock slope—masses of rock piled together—the centre being hollow, now filled up by the substance of the hills around. It comes down in a semi-liquid state—it is amazing to see the size of the rocks that the force of the water carries down the flumes—and gradually settles down into a compact mass, the water finding its way out through holes left purposely into the reservoir behind.

Men have to watch the flumes at intervals lest a block occur and the plant be swept away; but, just as I imagined the other night, one man controls the sluice and therefore this tremendous devastating force. I positively ached to have that lever under my hand, that little lever that so easily swings the great jet from left to right and raises or depresses it at will. But no canny Scot would allow such power to a female, and I did



## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

not expect it; though doubtless his countrymen will soon with the rest of mankind in Great Britain accord us the vote!

From my room I looked down on the lake behind the dam—the reservoir in fact, but as little like a reservoir as it is possible for such a thing to be: just a lake formed by the water being pent in between the hills, and very beautiful it is.

As the manager said to me when exploring the Company's enforced interference with Nature, "no work of man could spoil the beauty of a place like that!" and I believe he is right. Though the works are now a blot on the face of Nature and have done away with the waterfall, and the dam must always destroy the picturesqueness of that end of the lake, yet the beauty of the place remains, and without them, instead of the sheet of water there would only have been an insignificant river flowing far below.

## NECAXA

Nature offered an ideal chance for stored water, a natural cup with but one outlet and man eagerly seized the offer.

What has been covered up may be gauged from the facts that two villages and their churches are engulfed, the inhabitants removed, and their homes and places of worship rebuilt high above. What wonderful discoveries of prehistoric dwellings will be made centuries hence!

• When the dam is finished the water will be far higher than it is now, but the mountains are high enough ever to dominate.

It was with great regret I left beautiful Necaxa — the place of loveliness and growth and greenness, combined with exceptional scenery—the only place where I saw green grass over the hill-slopes.

As the little train stopped here and there on the picturesque journey back, I saw that the scrub by the side of the

## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

way was bouvardia, that flower much prized for nosegays at home, and soon I had a handful of its sprays—a bouquet fit for a queen.

A series of gliding pictures, mountains and valleys, trees and gorges, and we were at Beristain again; and after luncheon proceeded on the further journey to Mexico City, where I arrived so late and so tired that I tumbled into bed at my hotel without any dinner.

## CHAPTER XIV

### SAN ANGEL

MY last place of work in the country was the San Angel Inn, a most quaint and attractive place which was originally a monastery, and is left almost as it was, though adapted as an inn. It is about forty minutes from the city by tram-car, and has a delightful garden with bosky trees behind, as well as two *patios* round which the rooms open into porticoes, and which are full of flowers reflected in the centre fountains.

An ideal place for an artist. I only regretted that I had not come to it sooner, that I might have had more time to paint its attractions, the many subjects it offered for one's brush.

As it was I could only get two pictures done, for I was obliged to be in the city

## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

a good deal about a little exhibition I held there before leaving the country.

There was talk of ghosts too in that inn, and legends as to the use of that outer staircase which I have portrayed. It led to the rooms on the corridors above the *patios* and to the large expanse of roof, from which there are fine views of the mountains—I am told, for they did not unveil their beauties for me out of the all-prevailing dust-cloud of spring.

Beside the stairway you look through to the inner *patio* where there was a wealth of geraniums, and on through the room which was mine and my window to the sunshine in the garden beyond.

But the main *patio* was where the real glory of flowers delighted the eye. Roses, heliotrope, jessamine, bougainvillea, carnations, stocks, geraniums, creepers, and flowering bushes in profusion caused me to linger too long over my fruit at breakfast in the glorious sunshine.





## SAN ANGEL

In the garden behind was a further wealth of flowers, dispersed between orange and myrtle and lemon trees. I picked a corner under the end of the house which was adorned with the splendid trumpet creeper and had a delicious tiny fountain of its own next fine cypresses, and spent several delightful mornings under a daphne tree, the favourite playground of large black and orange bees, the largest I have ever seen, who seemed to become quite drunk with daphne and were given to rushing against my face in a startling manner.

Little lizards and birds bore me company and sweet flowers exhaled their odours for my joy.

But even paradise can be dispelled when the silence is broken by raucous voices that exclaim "prachtvoll!" "wunderschön!" "ausgezeichnet!" in the alleys of the garden.

I had curious vicissitudes over my exhibition; when the pieces cut from the



## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

centre of the mounts I ordered were sent me and the borders I had so carefully measured for, thrown away! This too when the city had been ransacked for the dull tones that I liked, and no more were to be had. Also when I was told the night before the exhibition opened that I could not have the room! Lastly, when I nearly sent away my best reporter (of the leading picture paper) because I misunderstood his bewilderingly polite Spanish request to be allowed to photograph some of the paintings. But in the end all difficulties were overcome, and all went well, and though it was a very unpretentious little affair—the pictures merely mounted and hung on screens, and the show only open for two days, it seemed to create a considerable amount of interest.

My last picture was of the mortuary chapel given to the English community by a generous Englishman who has large

## SAN ANGEL

interests in the country. It stands at the entrance to the Protestant cemetery, beautifully situated under fine trees on the outskirts of the city, and on the way to a place that rejoices in the name of Atzacapotzalco.

It was designed by a clever English architect living in Mexico, and is of the red *tisontle* of the country, faced and adorned with white cut stone. My drawing was an order, otherwise I should hardly have braved the difficulties of standing in the street with a crowd round me, or in the doorway of a shop as I eventually did, which became so blocked that I fear the bakery did little business.

I had hoped to be allowed to paint from a window above, and with that idea penetrated into the domain of a good lady to ask leave, but as she told me some one was ill in the front room, and probably with an infectious disease—there was nothing more to be said, so I set

## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

my teeth and went through with it below, working up to the eve of my departure.

Some pleasant lunches and dinners and other meetings with kind people and I came to my last night at the Legation, where a very few special friends were gathered to wish me luck—there were five guests and five nationalities represented—and next morning I was off at an early hour on the return journey to Vera Cruz.

It was terribly hot and dusty, and I am afraid I was too fagged out to enjoy the wonderful scenery. But one pleasant incident broke the monotony, the appearance at Cordoba of my Puebla cicerone, who assuaged my distress with fruit and literature and cheered me on my way.

I was done out of ten dollars *en route*, so fearing I should run short of Mexican money, gave up going to an hotel in Vera Cruz and went instead on board the boat and slept in my cabin, in terror of mosquitoes and yellow fever.

## SAN ANGEL

But in spite of being devoured all night, my luck stood: it lasted me well too through my ten days' voyage in the Gulf of Mexico and up the coast of the Eastern States to New York; ten days of lovely weather, one of which we spent off Progreso, the port of Yucatan, and two more at Havana, where we sweltered for forty-eight hours in that close land-locked harbour, lading pine-apples for New York that were not wanted—the papers reporting the market as glutted with them, and dozens thrown away every day. Quarantine forbade us to land, so there we lay with nothing to do in the piffling heat, and chafing to be off.

At night the harbour became beautiful with its numerous lights, and the great liners and tramps dotted about were filled with radiance, even the small boats and launches scampering round left trails of lovely phosphorescence.

But here it was that my luck really

## IMPRESSIONS OF MEXICO

failed. For owing to our long stay the steamer arrived many hours late at New York, and missed the sailing of the White Star liner on which my cabin had been taken.

This necessitated waiting for another boat of the same line and a four days' stay in New York, which is no place for a poor artist, as I have before hinted, unless he or she is well acquainted with the ropes, and even then I doubt if a woman could make use of them.

But the pictures in the Museum made up for a good deal, and I have a memory of "sky-scapers" lit up against the deep blue night sky which is a treasure and contrasts curiously with recollections of one-storied buildings round *patios* full of flowers and the many other entrancing visions of beautiful Mexico.

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